Getting to know your microwave cooker

Owning a microwave cooker will revolutionize your cooking. Get to know it and use it well, and you will find you can have meals on the table in a fraction of your usual times.

With a microwave cooker you can cook fresh foods and thaw frozen ones in minutes instead of hours. You can also use it for a host of small tasks to make meal preparation simpler.

Master the controls

When you first buy a microwave cooker, and from time to time while you are learning about this new method of cooking, read the manufacturer's instructions carefully. Try a few simple recipes until you can use the controls with confidence and then move on to more imaginative creations. Gradually the microwave could become your favourite cooking appliance.

What are microwaves?

Microwaves are high-frequency electromagnetic waves closely resembling ordinary daylight or radio waves. But whereas radio waves vary in length from 1 metre/3 feet to many kilometres/miles, microwaves are very short — less than 12.5cm / 5in long. Microwaves are not hot, so there is no heat in the microwave cooker. Instead the waves penetrate the food, providing energy which vibrates the water molecules in food — the incredibly rapid vibration produces extreme heat which cooks your food. Microwaves are not retained in the air or food when you open the cooker door.

Safety

Microwaves cannot penetrate metal, so the cooker cavity is lined with metal. The door, usually transparent, is lined with a fine metal mesh which also prevents the waves passing through. The microwaves are therefore completely contained within the cooker when the door is shut, and all cookers are designed so they will not operate with the door open. Do not tamper with locks.

In manufacture, microwave cookers go through stringent tests to detect possible leakage. If your cooker is damaged and you suspect it may leak, you can have it tested by a microwave engineer.

Do

- Plug into an ordinary 13amp* socket without special wiring.
- Use your microwave to cook fresh food, thaw frozen foods and reheat already cooked food.
- Use ovenproof glass and glass ceramic utensils, earthenware and china, plastic and paper products, wood and basketware. Look out for labels reading 'Microwave safe' or 'Suitable for microwave'.
- Use cling film to keep foods moist and absorbent paper to soak up fat and keep bread dry.
- Use tiny amounts of foil to shield foods that cook quickly.
- Use your microwave to warm up drinks — like coffee.

*15 amp in Australia and New Zealand.

TIMING

Timing is crucial when you are cooking by microwave — a few seconds may make the difference between cooked and over-cooked food. Many factors affect timing, such as the output of your cooker, the temperature of the food when it goes in, or the type of cooking dish used. Always cook for the minimum times suggested in recipes, and test before you cook further.

Don't

- Dry wet clothing or papers in the microwave. Heat may cause them to ignite.
- Use metal utensils or foil containers in the microwave. Don't use metal ties; use string or rubber bands to close cooking bags.
- Cook eggs in the shell, or reheat hard-boiled eggs in the microwave — they will explode.
- Dry fruit in the microwave.
- Use conventional meat or sugar thermometers. They may be used outside the cooker to check temperatures, but not during cooking.
- Use a damaged cooker, especially if the door is affected.
- Deep fry in your microwave because you cannot control the temperature of the oil.

Microwaves- how they work

A microwave cooker runs off an ordinary household electrical socket — it needs no special installation. Inside the cooker is a magnetron which converts the electrical power into microwaves.

The single fact that microwave energy does not produce heat but causes invisible movement of food molecules, explains the mystery of how hot food and warm utensils can emerge from a completely cold oven.

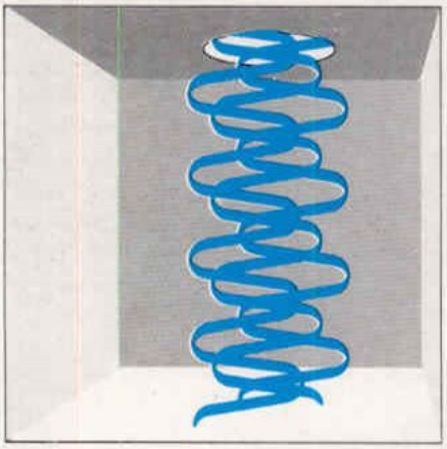
How microwaves affect water, fat and sugar

Water *is driven to the surface of food during microwaving. This moisture evaporates but prevents the surface becoming crisp.*

Fat *is drawn to the surface, where it browns on foods that are cooked for a long time.*

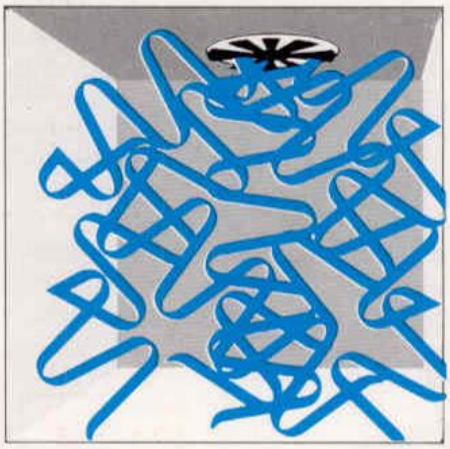
Sugar *attracts microwave energy. While the surface temperature equalises with air, the centre of sweet foods becomes very hot and may easily overcook.*

How microwaves are broadcast into the cooker



Energy *enters the cooker cavity through an opening in the metal case, usually at the top. Hot spots occur if it is not distributed evenly.*

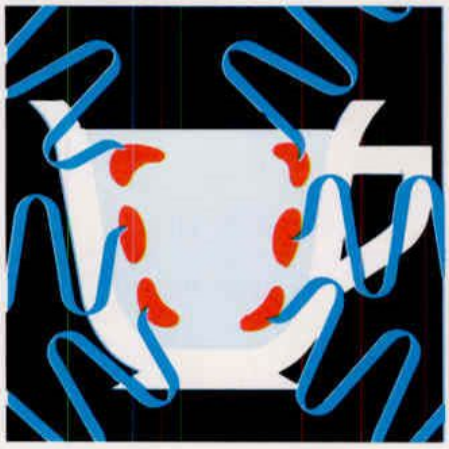
A concealed mechanism *distributes microwaves to different parts of the cooker. Many cookers have a turntable which rotates food while cooking.*



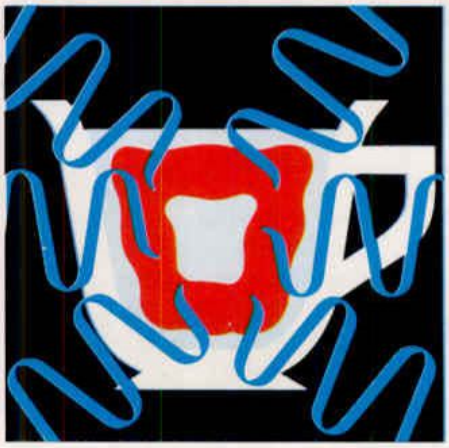
Microwaves *cannot penetrate metal, so they are deflected off the cooker walls at right angles, making a random pattern and encouraging even cooking.*

How microwaves cook food

Microwaves *penetrate food from all directions to a depth of 2-4cm / ¾-1½in. They cause no chemical change in the food.*



Vibration *of water molecules causes heat in the area where microwaves have penetrated. These areas begin to cook immediately.*



Heat *then spreads to the centre of the food by conduction, just as in conventional cooking. Stirring or turning food distributes the heat evenly.*

Basic Techniques

There are a few simple techniques to learn when you start to cook.

Shielding

Microwaves cannot pass through metal, so generally metal utensils and aluminium foil are not used in the microwave cooker. In fact the presence of any large quantity of metal in the cooker may cause sparking and damage it. But small pieces of foil can be used to shield selected parts of the food, to prevent overcooking. (Do not let foil touch the sides of the cooker.)

When foods are an uneven shape, such as chicken pieces or a leg of lamb, shield the thin, bony ends with foil for part of the cooking time. This gives the thicker parts time to cook through. Use the same technique to shield the tail end of a whole fish. If you have several foods on the same plate, shield the more delicate foods for part of the cooking time.

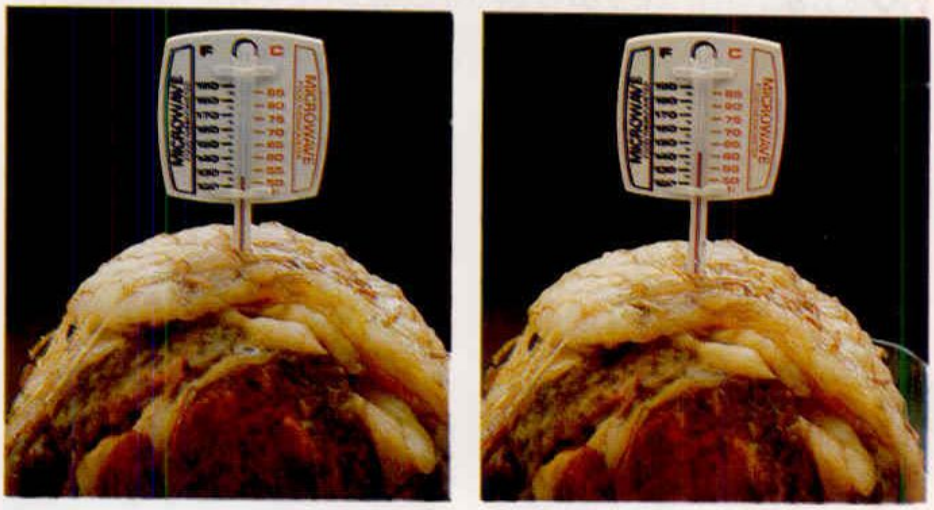
A generous helping of sauce is another effective shield for delicate foods. Cover meats or vegetables with sauce to prevent them drying out in the microwave.

Shield *foods which attract microwave energy with a sauce to keep them moist. Use small strips of foil on areas that will cook quickest.*

Standing time

Food continues to cook when removed from the microwave cooker, by the heat generated within itself. Standing time is therefore an important part of the microwave process, used to complete cooking and to tenderize the food right through.

Large or dense vegetables and fruit need standing time rather than more microwave time so that the exterior does not become mushy while waiting for the interior to cook through. Roast meats require standing time both to complete internal cooking without drying the outside and to make carving easier. If the food has been cooked with a cover, leave it covered for the standing time. If it was cooked uncovered, add a loose covering of foil to retain the heat.



Standing time *allows microwaved foods to finish cooking by internal heat after they are removed from the cooker. A microwave thermometer shows how the internal temperature of a joint rises during standing time.*

Turning and stirring

Turning is necessary to ensure even distribution of microwaves through the food. Foods which stand high in the cooker – like poultry or a joint of meat – will need turning over to allow all parts of the food to receive equal amounts of energy. This is because microwaves enter through the top of the cooker and are also reflected back towards the top from the metal base of the cooker.

Smaller foods such as steaks, chops, or large whole vegetables, need rearranging from time to time; casseroles and sauces need stirring to distribute the heat evenly. Your recipe will tell you when to turn or stir.

High foods *may require shielding or turning over to distribute the heat evenly. Areas close to the top of the cooker receive more energy.*

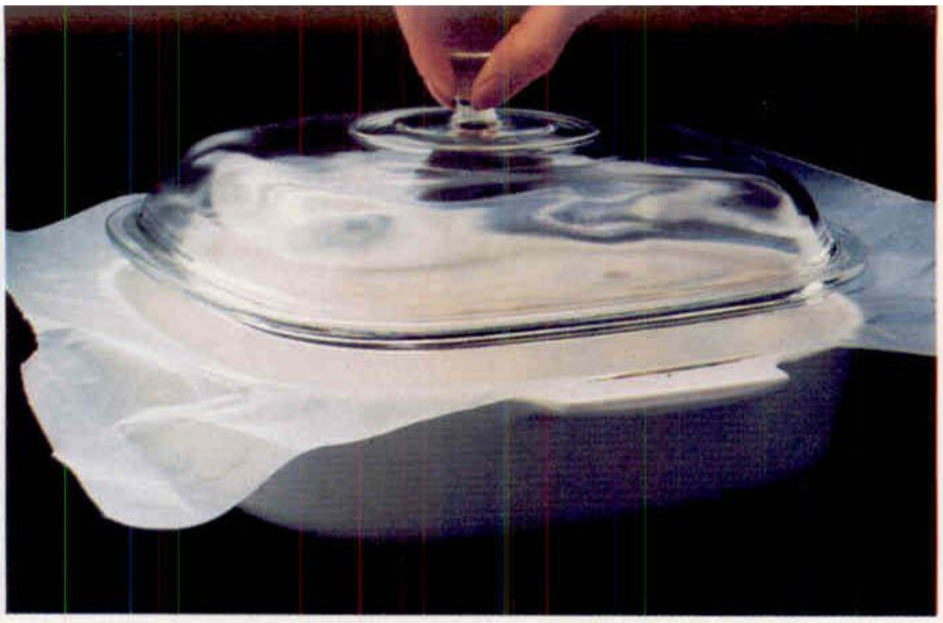
Covering

Covering serves the same purpose in microwaving as it does in conventional cooking. While there is little evaporation because of the speed of the process, a cover holds in the steam to tenderize the food, keep it moist and shorten cooking time. It also contributes to more even cooking and allows the minimum amount of liquid to be used, ensuring flavour and nutritional value are not lost.

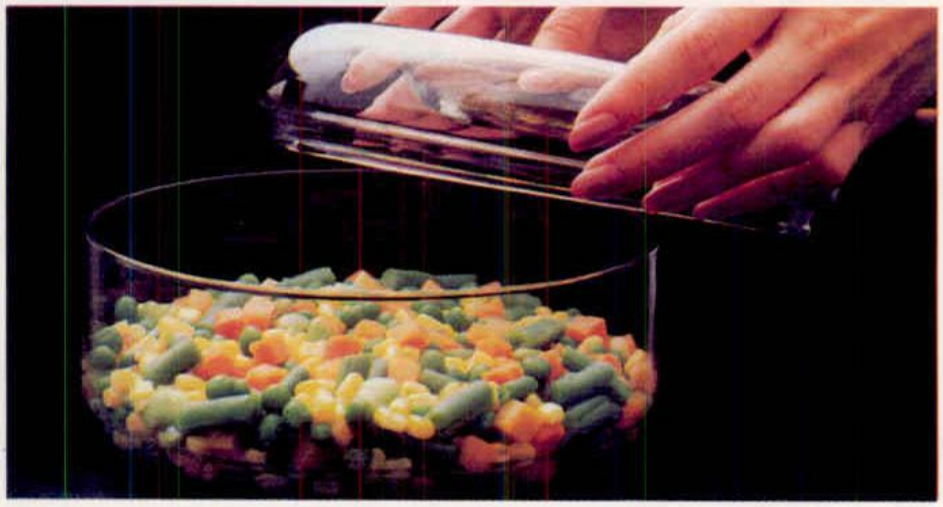
In general, foods which are covered during conventional cooking should be covered when you microwave them.

A casserole lid can be used to make a loose or tighter-fitting cover (see right). Cling film provides a suitable covering for dishes which have no lid.

Roasting bags make a perfect covering for many foods, but be sure not to use the metal tie supplied. Less familiar coverings such as absorbent paper and greaseproof paper help absorb moisture and prevent splattering of fat round the cooker.

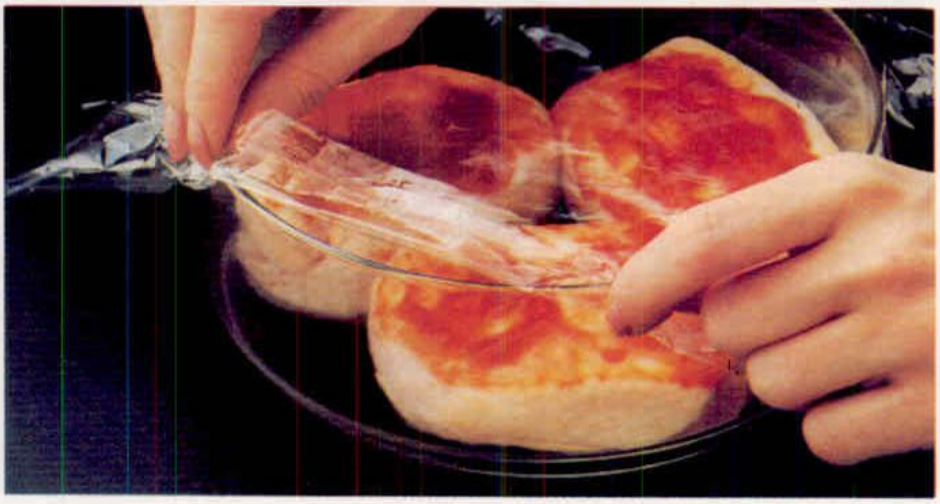


Loose *casserole covers allow some steam to escape. In most cases this makes little difference. If a recipe specifies cover tightly, a sheet of greaseproof paper may be placed under the lid to make the fit tighter and so contain the steam.*

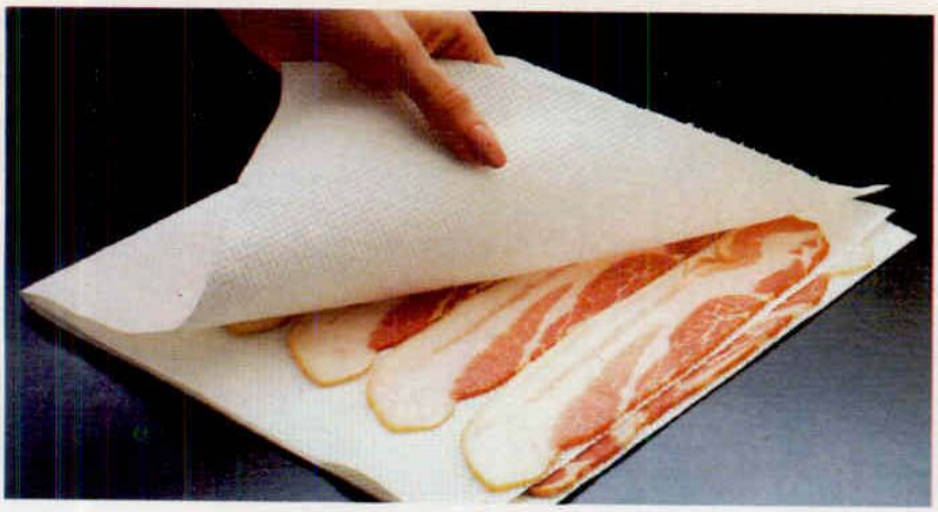


A tight cover *fits snugly over the rim of the casserole, leaving no gaps for steam to escape. This type of cover is particularly useful when steaming vegetables which do not require added moisture.*

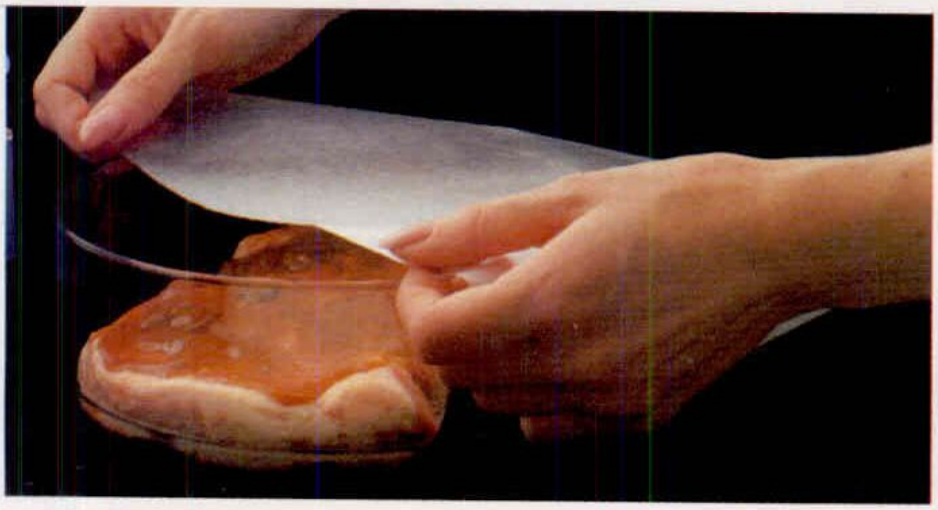
A tight covering *of cling film can be used for foods that have little or no added liquid.*



For foods *cooked in liquid, or which create a great deal of juice, make a gap in the cling film cover by rolling back one edge. This allows excess steam to escape. If trapped, too much steam may make the cling film explode.*



Absorbent paper *allows steam to escape, but stops fat splattering and absorbs excess moisture. Use to cover bacon or other fatty foods when cooking without either a lid or cling film.*



Greaseproof paper *forms a loose cover similar to partial covering in conventional cooking. Use it to hold in heat, speed cooking and prevent splatters with food which does not need steam.*

Roasting bags *hold in steam to tenderize meat. Before microwaving, remove any foil from the bag and discard the metal twist tie. Secure loosely with an elastic band, string or a plastic strip cut from the end of the bag. Place bag in a cooking dish.*

Absorbent paper *soaks up moisture trapped between the food and cooker floor and keeps bread surfaces dry.*

Damp absorbent paper *can steam fish or soften tortillas. Heat 4 at a time between moist absorbent paper for 10-20 seconds at 100% (High).*

Basic vegetable cookery

Microwaving is the perfect way to cook young, tender vegetables. Not only do they cook quickly, but they stay crisp and tasty and keep their bright, fresh colours. The rapid cooking in tiny amounts of water is the surest way to retain their food value.

For cooking by microwave, always select top-quality, vegetables. Microwaving will not tenderize stale, or overmature, woody produce with a low moisture content. So when buying, choose the youngest and freshest you can.

Frozen vegetables are nearly always picked and processed when young, so you will get good results when cooking these by microwave. Many manufacturers now give microwaving instructions on the pack, alongside conventional cooking instructions.

Use the same basic microwaving techniques for vegetables as you do for other foods. Of these, standing time is the most important and often most neglected. Remember that food continues cooking while standing; if it is not done to your taste after standing, you can always microwave it longer, but beware of overcooking. Times given in our recipes are for vegetables which are tender, and have lost their raw taste but are not mushy.

Most vegetables are cooked covered, with only a few tablespoons of water or a little butter for extra moisture. They therefore cook in their own steam and the food value is not thrown away with the cooking water. For covering, use a casserole lid or cling film rolled back at one edge. Stir small vegetables or pieces after half the cooking time, bringing the outside pieces to the centre of the dish and distributing the heat evenly. Arrange whole or halved vegetables in a ring, leaving plenty of space between them; turn them over halfway through cooking.

If cooking whole vegetables in their skins, prick the skins well with a fork or slit them with a knife. Otherwise steam will build up inside the skin and the whole vegetable will explode.

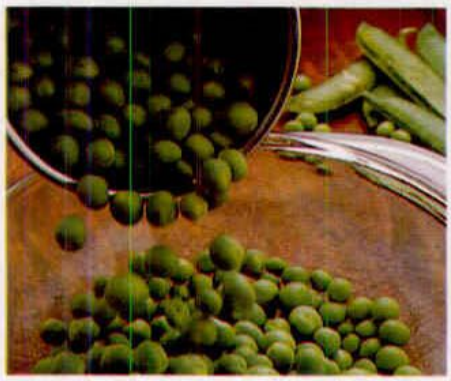
In general it is best to salt vegetables *after* cooking in the microwave, or to dissolve salt thoroughly in water before adding it. Sprinkling salt directly on the vegetables before cooking will toughen and dry them.

How to microwave grated carrots

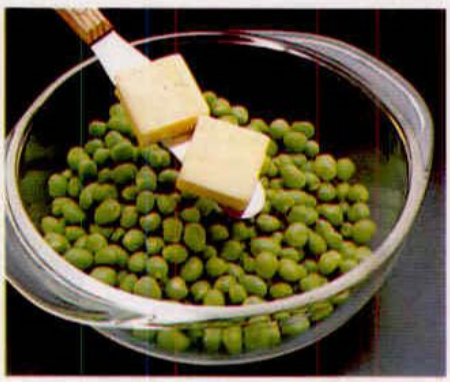
Grate *coarsely 225g / 8oz peeled carrots. Place in a 23cm / 9in shallow serving dish with 25g / 1oz butter, divided into two pieces.*

Cover *with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave on 100% (High) for 2½-3 minutes. Stir after butter melts and before serving.*

How to microwave peas



Put *450g / 1lb frozen peas into a 1L / 1¾pt serving dish.*



Add *60ml / 4tbls water or 25g / 1oz butter and cover with cling film.*

Microwave *on 100% (High) for 7 minutes, stirring after 4 minutes.*

Easy informal dinner

Using a microwave cooker, it is easy to have a party-style dinner on the table in less than an hour. Fish and vegetables cook to perfection in a microwave and a fresh fruit compote makes the ideal quick dessert.

This informal menu is a light, healthy meal of fish poached in white wine, complemented by spiced rice and fresh broccoli. Fish cooked by microwave is always moist, succulent and full of flavour. Vegetables cook so quickly there is little loss of nutrients and cooking rice in a microwave is a foolproof way of ensuring the grains never stick.

The fruit compote cooked in the microwave will be bursting with flavour and contrasting textures. Cook it until the firm pears are just tender but still crisp. The sugar will dissolve in the heat of the fruit after cooking.

In the hands of a cook with flair, a simple dinner like this becomes a party, with the food rather than the setting providing the decorative element. From the elegance of the presentation, it is hard to believe this intimate menu takes only minutes to prepare.

Present the tomato-garnished fish and rice on a plain serving plate garnished with sprigs of parsley to echo the bright green of the lemon-flavoured broccoli.

Set off the colourful starter with a glass or a wooden bowl and choose a glass dish for the fruit compote. Now you have a microwave, choose any new tableware to be microwave safe — that way you save on washing up as well as cooking time.

Countdown

45 minutes before serving
Prepare fruit and microwave compote. Microwave the brown rice. While the rice is cooking, prepare the salad, without dressing, and refrigerate until ready to serve. Prepare the broccoli and fish ready for cooking.

20 minutes before serving
Add the water and cook broccoli at 100% (High) for 8 minutes. Leave to stand while microwaving fish, keeping it covered to hold the heat.

While fish stands, prepare the sauce for the broccoli and slice lemon for garnish.

5 minutes before serving
Reheat the rice at 100% (High) for 1-3 minutes. Complete the broccoli by adding the melted butter and lemon juice, then cut and twist the lemon slices to provide an elegant garnish.

To serve
Remove the rice and fish to a serving plate and garnish with the parsley. Toss salad with dressing just before serving or pass the dressing separately in a sauce bowl or jug.

Transfer the fruit compote to a pretty serving bowl and serve with whipped cream if you wish.

Arrange *the broccoli spears in a shallow serving dish with the heads towards the centre.*

Stir *the sugar into the fruit after cooking. It will dissolve during standing time.*

Lemon broccoli

9 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

700g / 1½lb broccoli, trimmed and cut into spears
125ml / 4fl oz hot water
65g / 2½oz butter or margarine
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
salt and pepper
lemon twists to garnish

SERVES 4

1 Place the broccoli spears in a shallow serving dish, in a circle with the heads towards the centre.
2 Add the water, cover with cling film, rolling back one edge a little, and microwave at 100% (High) for 8 minutes, rotating the dish after 4 minutes. Leave to stand for 5 minutes, covered. Drain.
3 Microwave the butter in a small dish for 1 minute to melt it. Add the lemon juice, season and pour over the broccoli. Garnish.

Orange endive salad

A fresh salad with plenty of bite to set the meal off to a good start. Red onions are pretty and add colour to your salad, but if you can't find them, ordinary brown ones will give the same flavour. Use your own favourite oil and vinegar French dressing, or a bottled Italian dressing.

2 oranges
1 small head of curly endive, torn into pieces
1 small lettuce, torn into pieces
½ red onion, thinly sliced and separated into rings
45ml / 3tbls French or Italian dressing

SERVES 4

1 Remove the peel and pith from the oranges. Hold the fruit over a large bowl and cut between flesh and membrane to remove orange segments.
2 Add the endive, lettuce and onion rings and mix together.
3 Toss the salad in the dressing immediately before serving.

Saffron brown rice

13 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

175g / 6oz quick cook brown rice
250ml / 9fl oz hot chicken stock
125ml / 4fl oz dry white wine
1 onion, chopped
25g / 1oz butter
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground saffron or turmeric
salt and pepper

SERVES 4

1 Combine all the ingredients in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole and cover with a loose-fitting lid or with cling film rolled back at one edge.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, then reduce power to 50% (Medium) and cook for another 8 minutes.
3 Leave to stand, covered, for 5 minutes.

Note If you cannot buy quick-cook brown rice, use normal brown rice. Cook as follows: 20 mins at 100% High), 15 mins at 50% (Medium).

Wine-poached haddock

4 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

4 x 100g / 4oz haddock tail fillets*
75ml / 3fl oz dry white wine
salt and pepper
1 tomato, cut into 8 slices
10ml / 2tsp chopped fresh parsley
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried basil
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
parsley sprigs to garnish

SERVES 4

1 Fold a third of the tail end of each haddock fillet underneath itself.
2 Place them in a large shallow dish. Add the wine and season to taste. Top each fillet with two slices of tomato. Sprinkle with parsley and basil and dot with butter or margarine.
3 Cover with cling film, rolling back one edge a little, and microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes. Rotate the dish after 2 minutes.
4 Leave to stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Arrange on top of the rice and garnish with parsley.

*In Australia and New Zealand use gem fish or ling.

Fruit compote

5½ mins

Standing time: 2 mins

200g / 7oz sliced pears
200g / 7oz peeled, sliced peaches
200g / 7oz pineapple chunks
200g / 7oz cherries
50ml / 2fl oz water
175g / 6oz demerara sugar

SERVES 4

1 Combine the prepared fruit and water in a casserole, cover.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 5½ minutes, stirring once.
3 Stir in the sugar. Cover again and leave to stand for 2 minutes.

Freezer notes

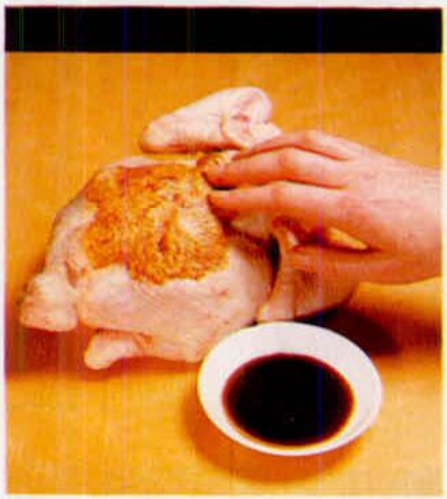
To thaw frozen haddock, open the package and remove any foil. Place in cooking dish. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 2-2½ minutes per 450g / 1lb. Separate, rearrange or turn the fish over. Microwave again for 2-2½ minutes per 450g / 1lb, or until pliable on the outside but ice in centre or thick areas. Leave to stand for 5 minutes.

How to microwave a whole chicken

To achieve the effect of roast chicken, use a roasting bag. This gives the best flavour and appearance. Alternatively, cover with a casserole lid or greaseproof paper; these coverings are also ideal for chicken cooked with a sauce.

Stand the chicken on a microwave roasting rack or an upturned saucer placed in the roasting bag. This allows the fats and juices to drain away.

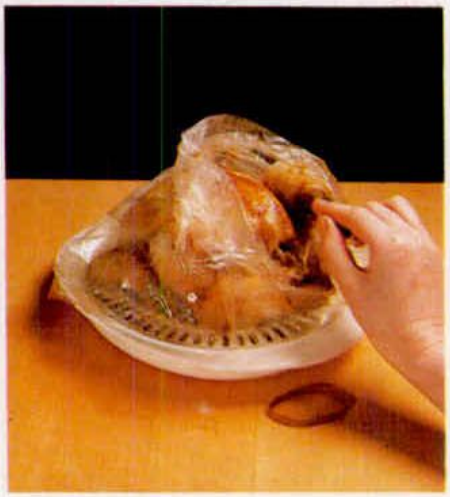
Turn the chicken halfway through cooking so that all parts will cook evenly.



Wash *and dry the chicken well. Weigh and calculate the cooking time, allowing 10-12 minutes per 450 g / 1lb. Mix together equal parts of melted butter and a browning agent. Rub or brush this into the skin.*

Place *the chicken, breast side down, on a roasting rack in a roasting bag. Fasten the bag loosely with an elastic band, string or a strip of plastic cut from the bag, allowing space for the steam to escape.*

Place *the roasting bag and rack in a microwave roasting tray or other suitable dish. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for the remainder of the first half of the calculated cooking time before re-arranging the chicken.*



Turn *the chicken breast side up. Microwave for the second half of the calculated time until cooked. If you pierce the skin between thigh and breast there should be no trace of pink. Let stand for 5-10 minutes. Do not use a microwave probe for poultry as it will not give a true reading.*

Casseroled chicken

28¼ mins

Standing time: none

1.1-1.8kg / 2½-4lb roasting chicken
250g / 9oz packet frozen mixed vegetables
5ml / 1tsp butter or margarine
5ml / 1tsp soy sauce
1 chicken stock cube
100g / 4oz pasta shapes, cooked
300g / 11oz can cream of celery soup
1 onion, finely chopped
30ml / 2tbls milk
1.5ml / ¼tsp mustard powder
salt and pepper

SERVES 4-6

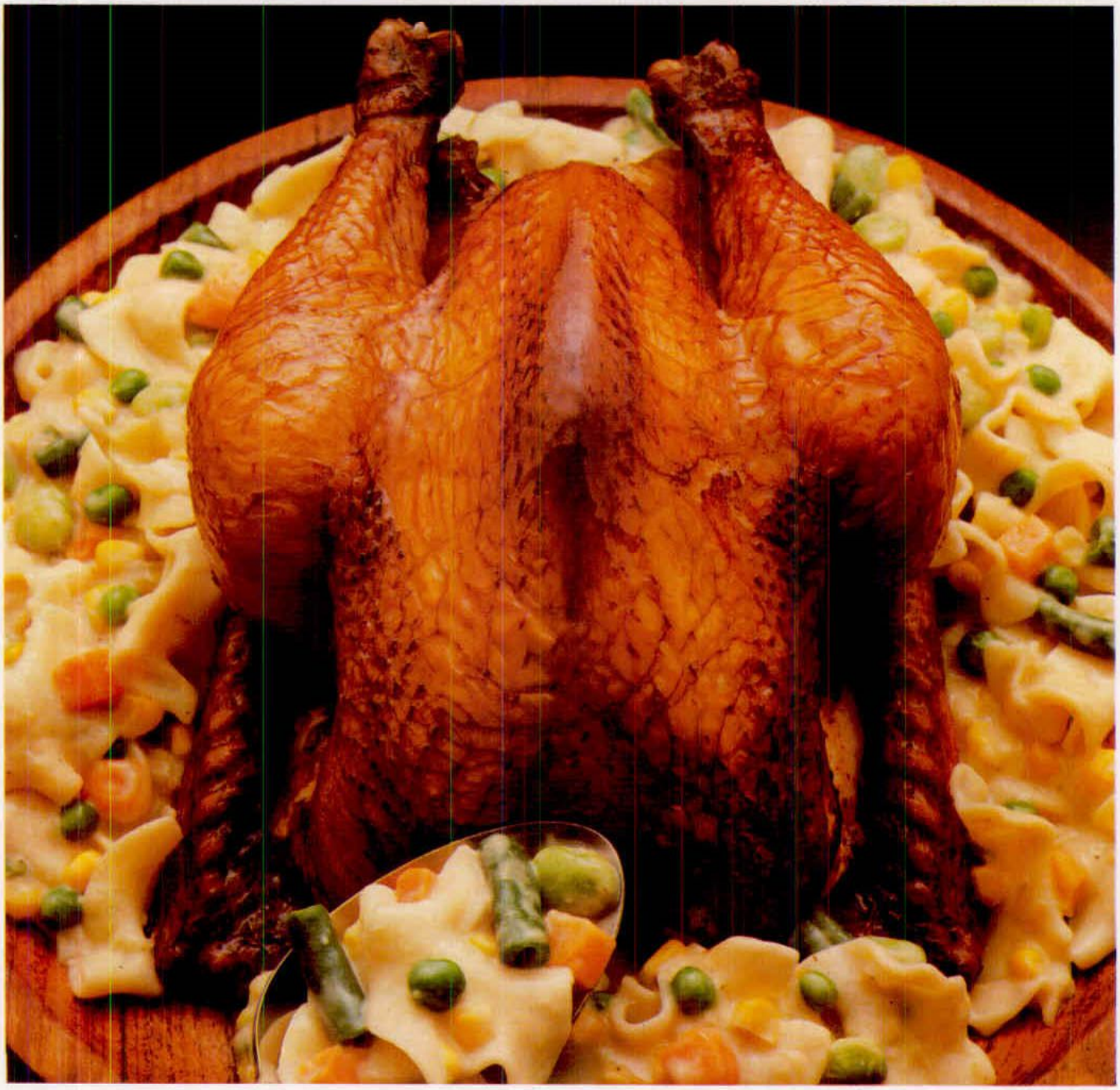
1 Weigh the chicken or check the label and calculate the cooking time required, allowing 10-11 minutes per 450g / 1lb.
2 Snip a corner off the packet of mixed vegetables and microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.
3 Put the butter into a small dish and microwave at 100% (High) for 20 seconds to melt it. Add the soy sauce and mix.
4 Place the chicken, breast side down, on a microwave roasting rack in a casserole. Rub or brush the back of the chicken with half the butter mixture. Cover with a lid or greaseproof paper.
5 Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium). Microwave for the remainder of the first half of the cooking time.
6 Meanwhile dissolve the stock cube in 50ml / 2fl oz of boiling water and combine with the pasta and remaining ingredients in a small bowl.
7 After half the calculated time, drain the chicken fat from the casserole, remove the rack and turn the chicken over. Brush the breast with the remaining butter and soy mixture.
8 Arrange the pasta mixture around the chicken. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for the remaining half of the calculated time, or until cooked.
9 Stir the pasta and serve hot straight away.

Microwaving chicken

The tender, lean flesh of chicken cooks perfectly in the microwave. It stays moist and tasty, and looks good too. Here you can learn how to cook a whole chicken and see the special techniques used to give it an attractive finish.

Although the meat tastes good, the skin of a microwaved chicken does not get crisp. It does develop some brown areas but special techniques are needed to give a more even and attractive colour. A browning agent such as soy sauce, brown sauce, paprika, or yeast extract can be rubbed into the skin – these give added flavour too. Or you can coat the chicken in a colourful sauce; the finished dish will then resemble a traditional braised chicken dish.

This Casseroled Chicken has been brushed with soy sauce and butter to give an attractive appearance.



Italian chicken

25 mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

1-1.6kg / 2½-3½lb roasting chicken
400g / 14oz can tomatoes
1 sachet bolognese sauce mix
5ml / 1tsp Worcestershire sauce
1.5ml / 1tsp dried oregano
salt and pepper
25g / 1oz grated Parmesan cheese

SERVES 4

1 Weigh the chicken and calculate the cooking time, allowing 10-12 minutes per 450g / 1lb.
2 In a bowl, combine the tomatoes (including juice), bolognese sauce mix, Worcestershire sauce, oregano and seasoning with 125ml / 4fl oz hot water.
3 Place the chicken, breast side down, in a deep casserole and top with the sauce mixture. Cover with a lid or greaseproof paper.
4 Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium). Microwave for the remainder of the first half of the cooking time.
5 Turn the chicken breast side up, baste with sauce and re-cover. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for the second half of the calculated time, or until cooked.
6 Five minutes before the end of the cooking time baste the chicken again and sprinkle with the cheese. Let stand for 5-10 minutes.
7 Serve the chicken on a bed of pasta. Hand the sauce separately.

Vegetable chicken

26½ mins

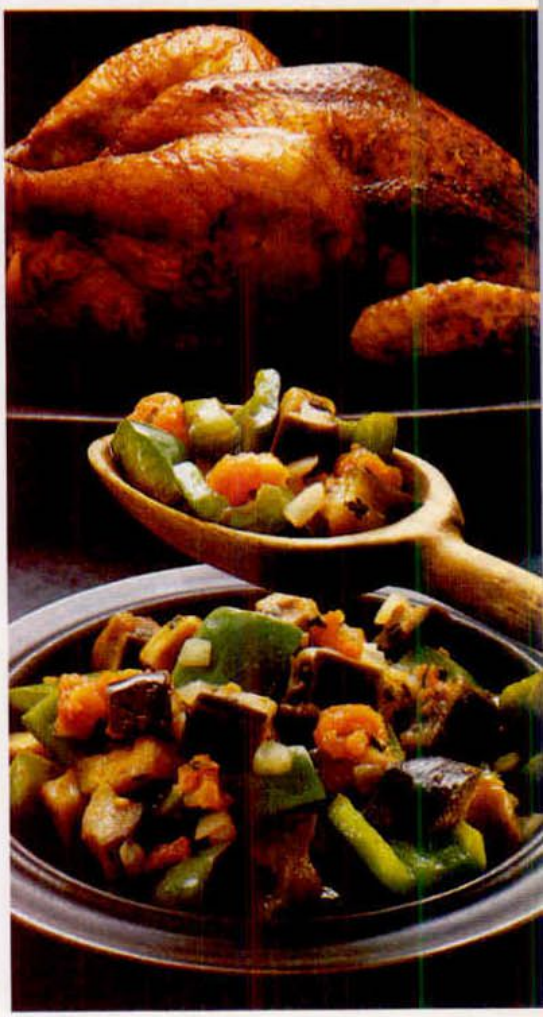
Standing time: 5-10 mins

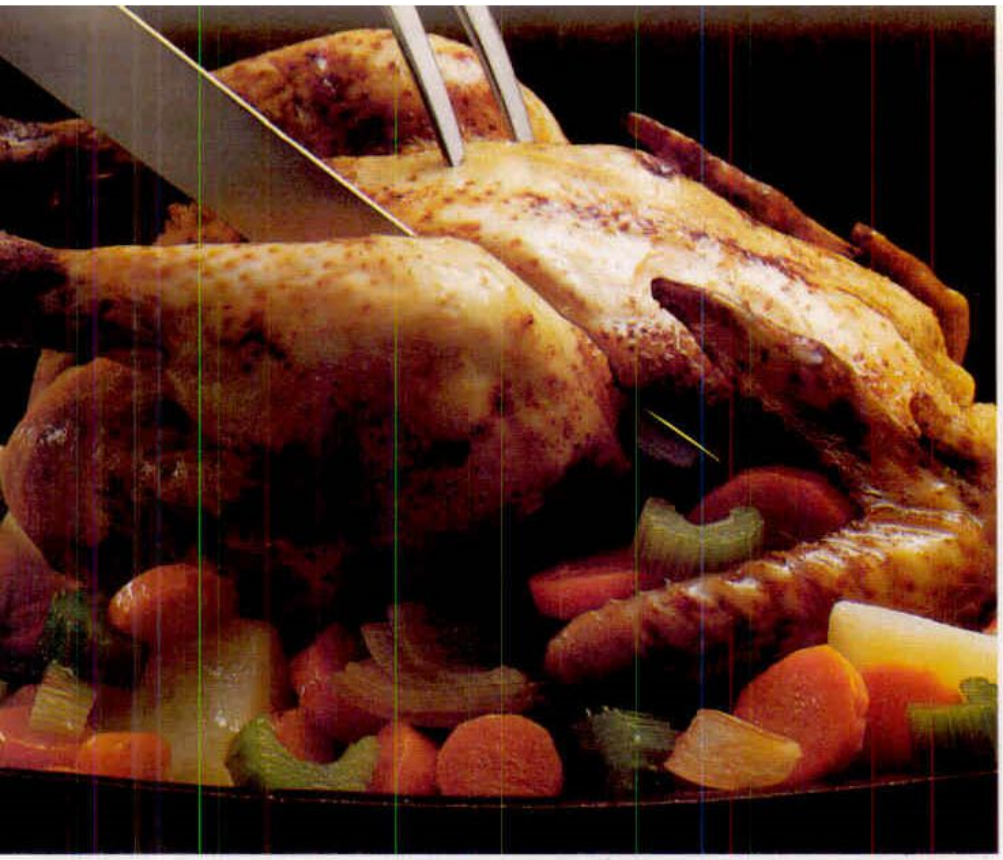
1-1.4kg / 2-3lb roasting chicken
15g / ½oz butter
15ml / 1tbls brown sauce

STUFFING
175g / 6oz aubergine, cut into 2cm / ¾in cubes
1 green pepper, seeded and cut into 2cm / ¾in cubes
1 tomato, skinned and diced
½ onion, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
15ml / 1tbls olive oil
2.5ml / ½tsp dried basil

SERVES 4

1 Mix the stuffing ingredients together in a 1L / 1¾pt bowl. Cover with cling film and microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes. Leave to cool slightly.
2 Spoon the stuffing into the chicken. Weigh chicken and calculate the cooking time at 10-12 minutes per 450g / 1lb.
3 Melt the butter by placing in a small bowl and microwaving at 100% (High) for 30-40 seconds. Add brown sauce and mix well.
4 Place the chicken, breast side down, on a roasting rack in a casserole. Brush the back with half the butter mixture. Place in a roasting bag fastened loosely with an elastic band or cover with lid.
5 Microwave at 100% (High) for the first 3 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for the remaining first half of the cooking time.
6 Turn the chicken breast side up and brush with the remaining butter mixture. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for the remaining time. Let stand for 5-10 minutes.





Braised chicken

20¼ mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

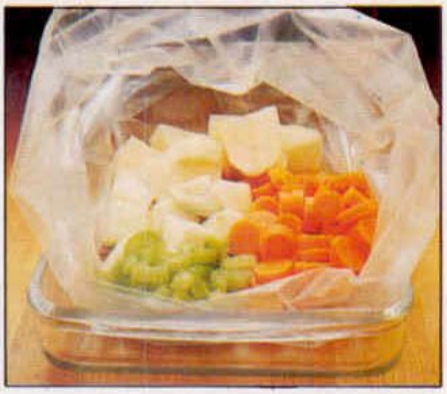
5ml / 1tsp butter
5ml / 1tsp brown sauce
4 carrots, peeled and cut into 6mm / ¼in slices
2 potatoes, peeled and quartered
1 celery stalk, cut into 6mm / ¼in slices
1 onion, cut into eighths
75ml / 3fl oz chicken stock
1 bay leaf
salt and pepper
1-1.6kg / 2½-3½lb roasting chicken

SERVES 4-6

Weigh bird and calculate cooking time, allowing 8-9 minutes per 450g / 1lb.

How to microwave Braised chicken

Melt *butter in a small dish at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds. Stir in brown sauce.*



Place *all the ingredients except the chicken in a roasting bag set in a 30 x 20cm / 12 x 8in baking dish.*

Brush *the back of the chicken with half the butter mixture. Place it in the bag, breast side down.*

Tie *the bag loosely with a plastic strip cut from the bag or an elastic band. Microwave at 100% (High) for half the calculated time.*

Open *the bag carefully. Turn the chicken over, brush the breast with remaining butter mixture and reseal the bag loosely.*

Microwave *for the remainder of the calculated cooking time. The chicken is cooked when the legs move freely. Let stand for 5-10 minutes.*

1 Place the broccoli spears in a large bowl and three quarters cover with cling film. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute. Separate the spears. Microwave for 2 minutes until thawed. Drain and chop finely.
2 Mix together the soup, mayonnaise, milk and salt and pour half into a 30 x 20cm / 12 x 8in baking dish. Arrange the chopped broccoli evenly over the top, then the sliced turkey. Pour the remaining soup mixture over, making sure it covers the turkey.
3 Cover the dish with greaseproof paper. Microwave at 100% (High) for 12 minutes or until heated through, giving the dish ¼ turn every 4 minutes.
4 Arrange the cheese slices on top. Microwave for a further 4 minutes, uncovered, until the cheese melts, turning the dish halfway through.
5 Leave to stand for 2-3 minutes; sprinkle with the potato chips.

Spicy bean stew

14 mins

Standing time: 2-3 mins

4 slices streaky bacon, rind removed, cut into 12mm / ½in pieces
30ml / 2tbls dried onion flakes
540g / 19oz can baked beans
275g / 10oz can broad beans, drained
425g / 15oz can chick peas, drained
350g / 12oz ham, cut into 12mm / ½in cubes
125ml / 4fl oz barbecue sauce
50g / 2oz soft light brown sugar
7.5ml / ½tbls prepared mustard
5ml / 1tsp Worcestershire sauce
2.5ml / ½tsp salt

SERVES 4

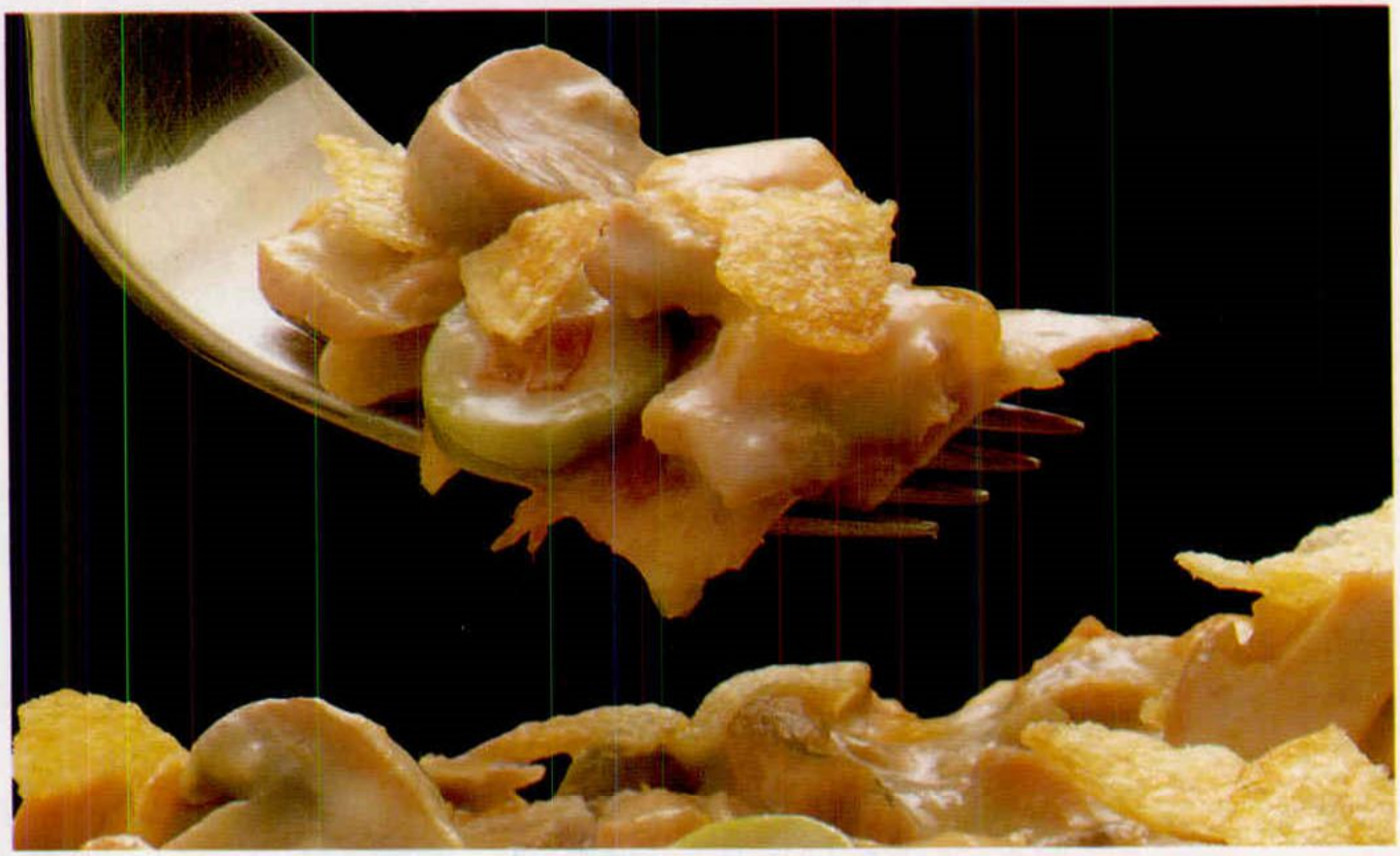
1 Place the bacon in a 2.3L / 4pt casserole. Cover with absorbent paper. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, stirring once. Drain on paper; reserve the fat.
2 Add the onion to the fat in the casserole. Microwave uncovered, at 100% (High) for 1 minute.
3 Stir in the bacon together with the remaining ingredients, cover and microwave for a further 10-12 minutes, stirring 2-3 times. Leave to stand for 2-3 minutes. Serve hot.

Meals from the storecupboard

When family or friends need a meal unexpectedly and in a hurry, a well-stocked storecupboard and refrigerator, plus the microwave cooker, can produce delicious meals in minutes.

A well-thought-out storecupboard will hold plenty of canned meat and fish, soups, particularly the condensed variety, and canned vegetables such as tomatoes. Canned baked beans, kidney beans and chick peas are all good fillers needing only reheating.

Combine these items with dry stores such as rice or pasta, frozen vegetables and leftovers from the refrigerator, for tasty meals.



Tuna crisp casserole

8 mins

Standing time: none

125g / 4oz potato crisps, crushed
300g / 11oz can condensed cream of mushroom soup
200g / 7oz can tuna fish, drained
275g / 10oz can sliced mushrooms, drained
50g / 2oz pimento-stuffed green olives, sliced
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, grated
250ml / 9fl oz milk
30ml / 2tbls dried onion flakes

SERVES 4

1 Mix two-thirds of the crisps and other ingredients in a bowl.
2 Pour the mixture into a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Microwave at 100% (High) for 8 minutes, stirring every 2 minutes, until thoroughly heated through.
3 Sprinkle the reserved crisps on top before serving.

Microtip

Remember microwaves soften ingredients so always add crisp garnishes such as packet potato chips after cooking.

Layered turkey bake

19 mins

Standing time: 2-3 mins

2 x 225g / 8oz packets frozen broccoli spears
300g / 11oz can condensed cream of chicken soup
90ml / 6tbls mayonnaise
125ml / 4fl oz milk
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
2 x 200g / 7oz canned turkey or chicken roll, sliced
6 slices processed cheese
25g / 1oz packet potato chips

SERVES 6

Settings for thawing

BONELESS JOINTS

20-30% (Defrost), 10 minutes per 450g / 1lb
Standing time, 30-45 minutes
50% (Medium), 6 minutes per 450g / 1lb
Standing time, 20-25 minutes

JOINTS WITH BONE

20-30% (Defrost), 5-6 minutes per 450g / 1lb
Standing time, 30-45 minutes
50% (Medium), 3-4 minutes per 450g / 1lb
Standing time, 25-30 minutes

Freezer notes

When choosing joints for your freezer, remember that even shapes, such as rolled ribs or topside of beef and top leg of pork or lamb, will thaw and cook more evenly in your microwave cooker than irregular shapes, and will, therefore, require less attention.

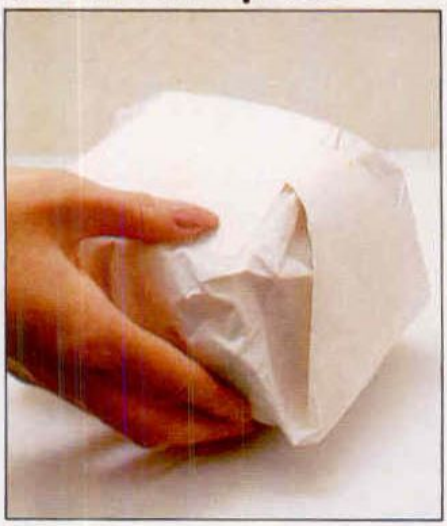
Thin, bony parts of irregularly shaped joints thaw and cook more rapidly than thicker areas and therefore require shielding with foil, as do large areas of fat.

Microtips

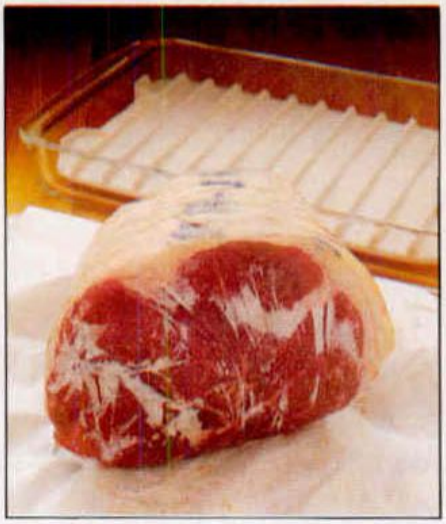
Reduce power level when microwaving dense foods like joints. The lower power level protects food from a high concentration of energy and helps even cooking; otherwise the outside cooks more quickly than centre.

If your cooker does not have variable power, use 100% (High) power in short bursts. Allow the same total time, with the microwave power on for one third of the time but leaving the joint to stand for periods in between.

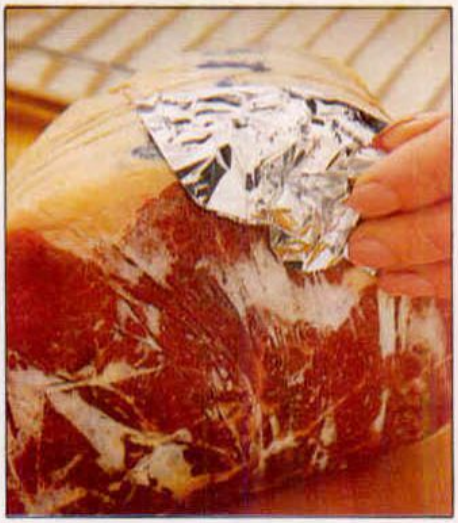
How to thaw joints



Place *the joint in the cooker in either cling film or paper wrapper. Thaw for the first quarter of the total time.*

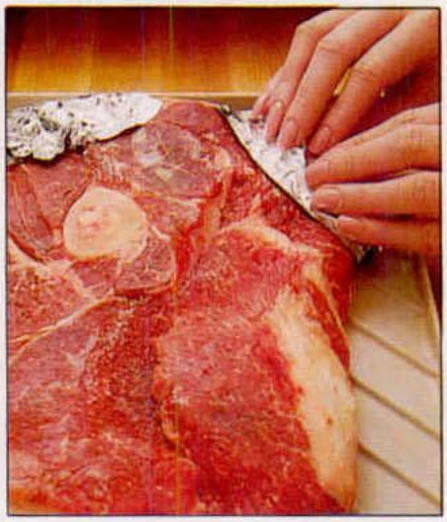


Remove *as much wrapping as possible. Put a microwave rack or inverted saucer in a baking dish.*

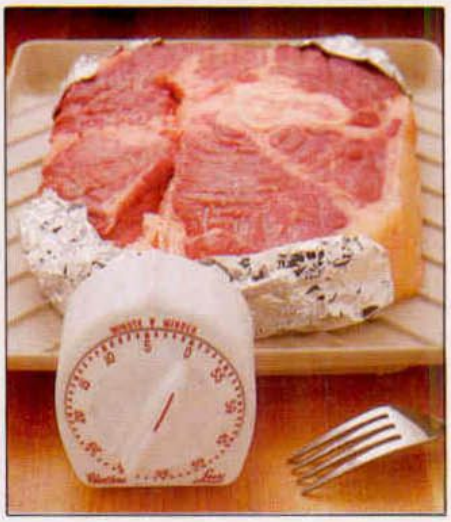


Feel *the joint for warm spots and shield them with foil. Turn the joint over on to the rack or saucer.*

Thaw *for second quarter of total time or until the surface is soft when pressed. Remove any remaining wrapping. Turn over and leave to stand for 10 minutes.*



Thaw *for the third quarter of total time. Shield any areas that feel warm; turn the joint over and pour off any liquid or fat.*



Leave to stand *according to joint and power setting used, until a skewer can be smoothly inserted into the centre of the joint.*

Thawing frozen meat

The microwave and freezer are perfect partners in a busy household. No longer do you have to wait 12 or 24 hours for frozen meat to thaw — an hour is long enough even for a large roasting joint.

Careful thawing is important to preserve the quality of frozen meat. As meat thaws it begins to lose its juices, which can result in tough dry meat when cooked. The microwave cooker enables you to thaw the meat quickly, immediately before cooking, and retain maximum moisture.

Unwrap the meat as soon as possible – trapped juices start 'runaway' cooking i.e. there is a danger that the outside will begin to cook before the centre is properly thawed. If the wrapping sticks to the frozen meat, simply start thawing and remove the packaging as soon as it loosens. Alternative power settings are given for thawing; best results will be obtained with the lower setting, but the higher one is satisfactory if you are really rushed.

Place the meat in a dish to catch the juices, but raise larger cuts on a microwave roasting rack so that the juices drain away from the meat. Microwave for the times indicated and then leave to stand until thawing is complete. You should *just* be able to pierce the centre with a skewer.

Settings for thawing

MEAT CUBES

20%-30% (Defrost), 6 minutes per 450g / 1lb
50% (Medium), 3½-4 minutes per 450g / 1lb
Standing time, 5-10 minutes

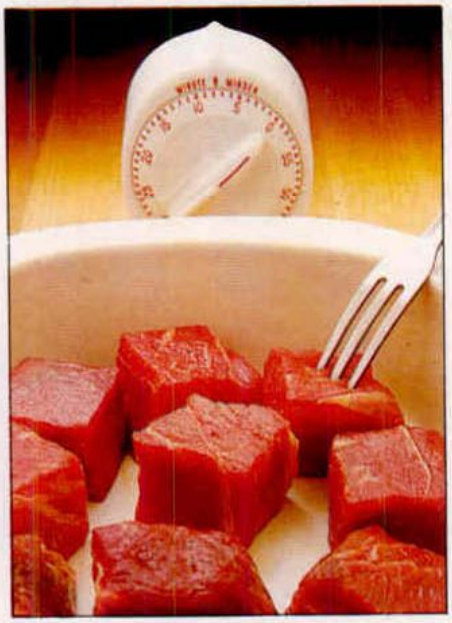
Settings for thawing

STEAKS AND CHOPS

about 2cm / ¾in thick
20-30% (Defrost), 7-8 minutes per 450g / 1lb
50% (Medium), 4 minutes per 450g / 1lb
Standing time, 10 minutes

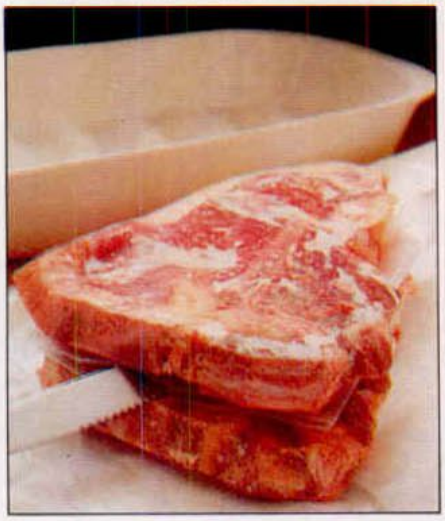
How to thaw meat cubes

Place *the package in the cooker. Thaw for half the total time. Unwrap and separate the pieces, removing any that have thawed.*

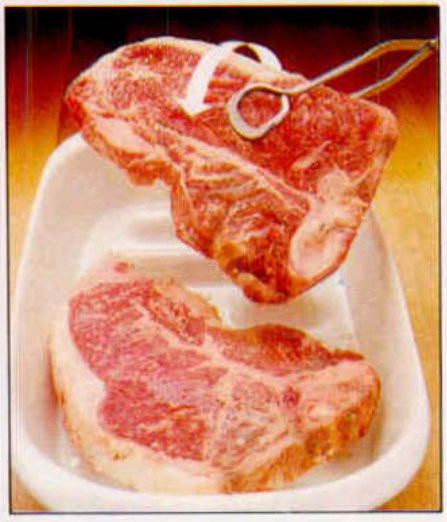


Spread *meat out in baking dish. Thaw for remaining time or until the surface is soft. Leave to stand for 5-10 minutes or until a fork can be inserted.*

How to thaw steaks and chops



Remove *as much wrapping as possible. Separate the meat with a table knife if stacked. Thaw for half the time, then remove remaining wrapping.*



Turn *the steaks or chops over. Thaw for the remaining time. Leave to stand for 10 minutes or until the meat can be pierced with a fork.*

Batch cooking for freezer and microwave

Time is short in the modern world. A day doesn't hold enough hours for everything that needs to be done. This goes for cooking too. Batch cooking is one of the answers. Cook one basic recipe in your microwave, divide it into three or four packages and freeze for future use.

When you need a fast meal, the microwave will have it thawed and reheated much more quickly than any of the conventional methods of cooking.

The basic recipe for Mexican Beef on page 20 can be transformed into Burritos, Mexican Flan, Mexican Salad and Spicy Tacos — four main courses with a South American flavour. Not only do the shapes and presentations change, but extra ingredients and other clever touches transform the minced beef mixture into something completely different each time. Yet because most of the work has been done at the preliminary cooking stage, all of these dishes can be on the table with their accompanying salads and/or vegetables, in 30 minutes or less. Not only have you used less time to cook and reheat these dishes than you would using a conventional oven, you have used less thinking and planning time by doing it all at once.

Batch cooking needs careful packaging and clear labelling so that nameless lumps do not gather in the dim recesses of your freezer. But once you have tried it, you will be a convert. What a feeling of accomplishment to know that when you have finished you will have four meals ready and waiting in the freezer, with the real pleasure yet to come!

When thawing food packed in plastic bags, remove from the bag as soon as possible, as most freezer bags will not withstand very high temperatures. Alternatively, if you freeze the food in roasting bags, it can then be thawed and reheated in the bag.

If securing freezer bags with metal ties, make sure you replace the ties with elastic bands, string or strips of plastic cut from the top of the bag before thawing in the microwave cooker.

How to pack cooked main dishes

Casserole *Line casserole with heavy-duty foil, add cold food. Freeze until firm. Remove from casserole with foil. Wrap tightly and place in plastic bags. Be sure to discard foil before thawing in microwave.*

Containers *Place cold food in rigid plastic containers, leaving 2.5cm / 1in headspace in large containers or 1cm / ½in headspace in smaller ones to allow enough room for expansion during freezing.*

Using a bag to pack meats in sauce

Support *bag in a carton, freezer box, jug or bowl. Add food, allowing plenty of headspace and room for sealing.*

Close *bag opening above food, squeezing out air. Twist the neck of the bag for about 4cm / 2in, to make headspace.*

Seal *above headspace, using twist ties or freezer tape. Pull out any deep folds which would be trapped in the food as it freezes.*

Settings for thawing

MINCED MEAT
Medium ground
20-30% (Defrost), 8 minutes per 450g / 1lb
50% (Medium), 4 minutes per 450g / 1lb
Standing time, 5-10 minutes

Freezer notes

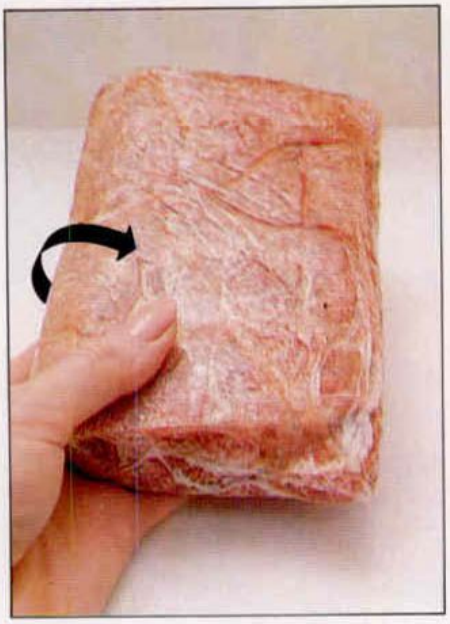
Save time by packing meat for the freezer in a material which is microwave-safe so that it can be transferred direct to the cooker for thawing. Plastic wrapping is best, but with no metallic lettering or decoration on it.

Microtips

Minced meat is especially liable to 'runaway cooking' during thawing in the microwave. Watch for this particularly when defrosting at 50% (Medium) — it is shown by the meat beginning to turn grey in patches.

How to thaw minced meat

Microwave *pierced package for one-third of total time.*



Turn *package over. Microwave for second third of the time.*

Open *package. Scrape off and remove soft pieces. Set aside.*

Place *remaining meat in a dish. Break up with a fork. Microwave for the remaining time.*

Interrupt *thawing of amounts over 450g / 1lb part way through the last period to remove soft pieces.*

Leave *to stand 5 minutes (450g / 1lb) or 10 minutes (over 450g / 1lb) until the meat is softened but still icy.*

1 Stir the beans and dressing into the beef mix. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes, or until heated, stirring once. Set aside.
2 In a large bowl combine the remaining ingredients. Add the beef and bean mixture and toss to combine. Serve hot or cold.

Beef-stuffed burritos

3½ mins

Standing time: none

1 container of Mexican Beef, thawed
4 x 30cm / 12in tortillas
2 tomatoes, chopped
50g / 2oz lettuce, shredded
1 ripe avocado, mashed
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, grated

SERVES 2-4

1 Place the tortillas between damp absorbent paper. Microwave at 100% (High) for 30-45 seconds.
2 Place a quarter of the beef mix in the centre of each tortilla. Top with the tomato, lettuce and avocado. Fold the sides of the tortillas in to make a package enclosing the filling.
3 Place the burritos on a serving plate. Sprinkle with the cheese. Microwave at 70% (Medium-High) for 3-4 minutes or until the burritos are heated through and the cheese has melted, rotating the dish ½ turn halfway through.
4 Serve hot, with hot chilli relish.

Spicy tacos

2 mins

Standing time: none

1 container of Mexican Beef, thawed
8 taco shells
75g / 3oz Cheddar cheese, grated

TOPPINGS
1 tomato, chopped
1 onion, chopped
50g / 2oz lettuce, shredded

SERVES 4

1 Place 30ml / 2tbls of the cooked beef in each taco shell. Arrange the shells upright in a dish lined with absorbent paper. Sprinkle 30ml / 2tbls cheese in each shell.
2 Microwave at 70% (Medium-High) for 2-3 minutes, rotating dish ½ turn halfway through.
3 Serve, sprinkled with toppings.

Spicy Tacos and Mexican Flan

Mexican flan

6 mins

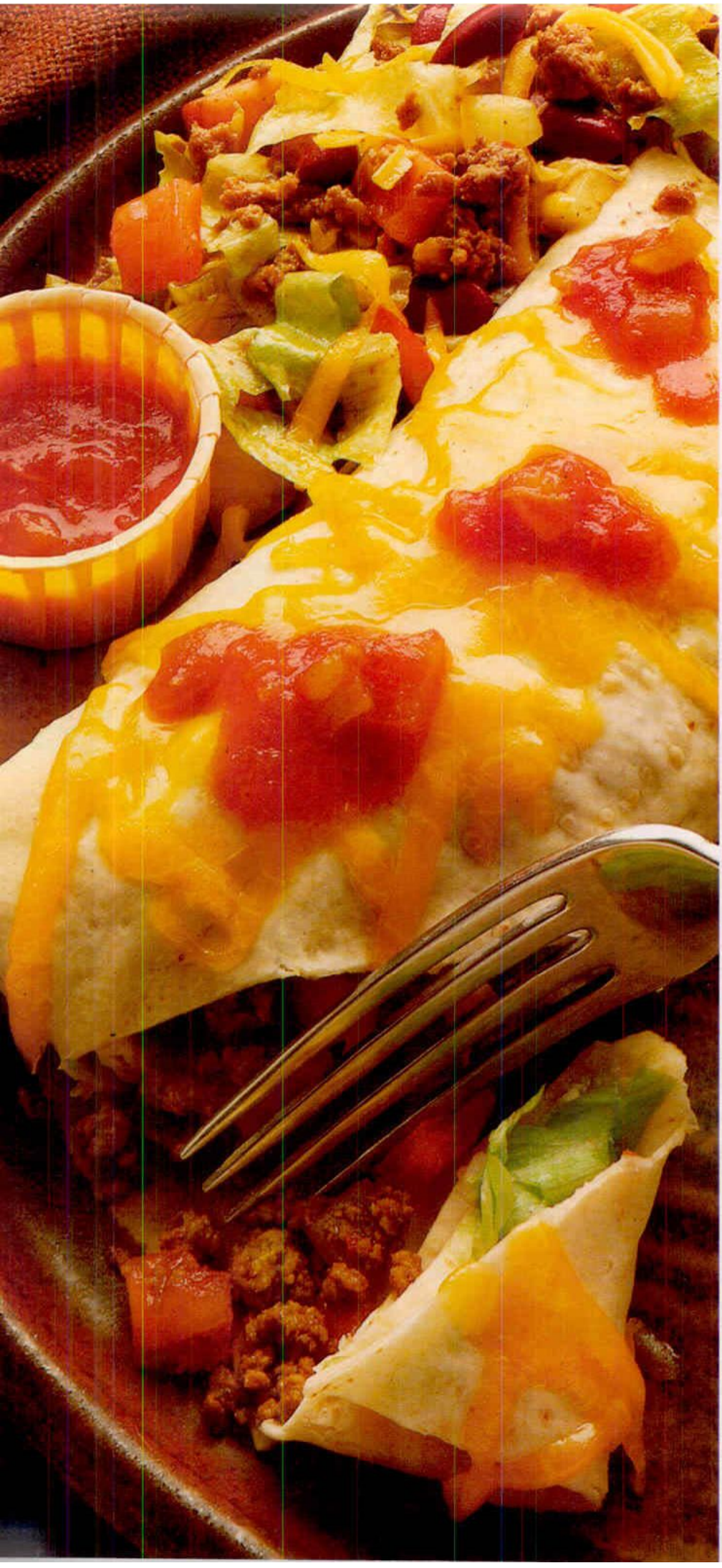
Standing time: none

425g / 15oz can red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
23cm / 9in shortcrust pastry case, cooked
100g / 4oz mild Cheddar cheese, grated
100g / 4oz mature Cheddar cheese, grated
1 container of Mexican Beef, thawed

TOPPINGS
50g / 2oz lettuce, shredded
1 tomato, chopped
50g / 2oz black olives, stoned and sliced
½ small onion, finely chopped
60ml / 4tbls soured cream

SERVES 4-6

1 Spread the beans over the cooked pastry case. Sprinkle over half of each cheese and spread the beef on top. Cover with the remaining cheese.
2 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 6-10 minutes, or until flan is heated through. Rotate the dish ½ turn halfway through cooking.
3 Serve hot sprinkled with one or all of the toppings or spoon over the cream.



Batch cooking: beef

Cook this basic recipe for Mexican Beef as the foundation for the 4 following recipes.

Mexican beef basic recipe

10 mins

Standing time: none

900g / 2lb lean minced beef
1 small onion, chopped
15ml / 1tbls chilli powder
salt and peppers
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground cumin
large pinch dried oregano
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

MAKES 4 CONTAINERS OF MIX

1 Crumble the minced beef into a 3.4L / 6pt casserole. Stir in the onion. Microwave at 100% (High) for 6-8 minutes or until the meat is no longer pink, stirring 2 or 3 times. Drain off surplus fat.
2 Stir in the remaining ingredients and cover. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 4-6 minutes, stirring 2 or 3 times.
3 Spoon into 4 containers. Cool, then freeze for up to 2 months.

TO THAW
Place in a 1L / 1¾pt casserole. Cover with a lid and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 2-3 minutes. Leave to stand for 5-10 minutes.

Mexican salad

1 min

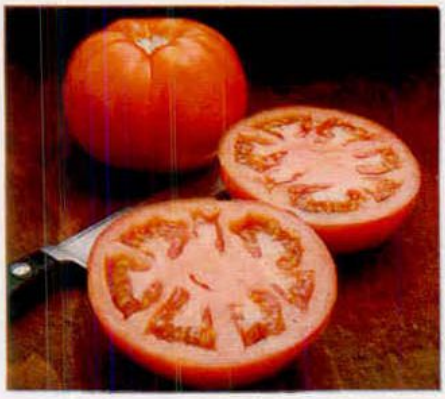
Standing time: none

425g / 15oz can red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
60ml / 4tbls French dressing
1 container of Mexican Beef, thawed
350g / 12oz lettuce, shredded
1 tomato, chopped
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, grated
½ small onion, chopped

SERVES 6

Beef-stuffed Burritos

How to microwave tomatoes

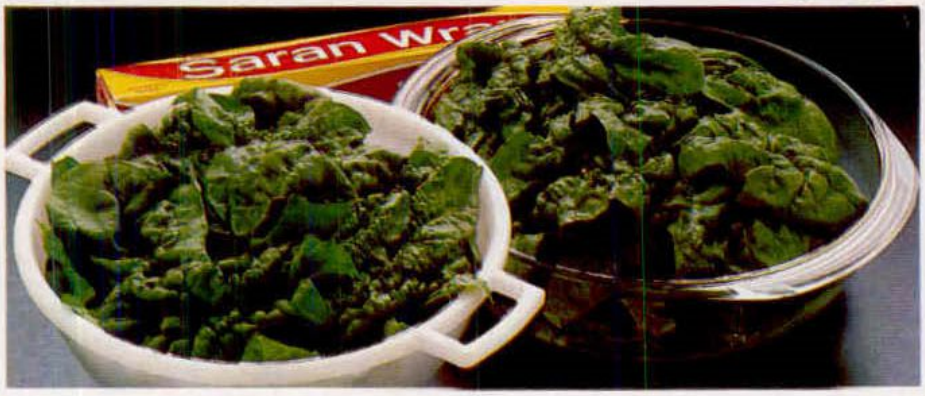


Cut *5cm / 2in diameter firm tomatoes into 2 equal halves. (If using soft ripe tomatoes shorten the cooking times.) Arrange, with space between, on a round shallow dish or plate.*

Top *with breadcrumbs and Parmesan cheese if desired. Cover and microwave on 100% (High), cooking 2 tomatoes 30-45 seconds, 4 tomatoes 1¼-1½ minutes.*

Rotate *each tomato ½ turn, then give the dish ½ turn. Re-cover and microwave for the same time again. Leave to stand for 2 minutes until tender and hot right through.*

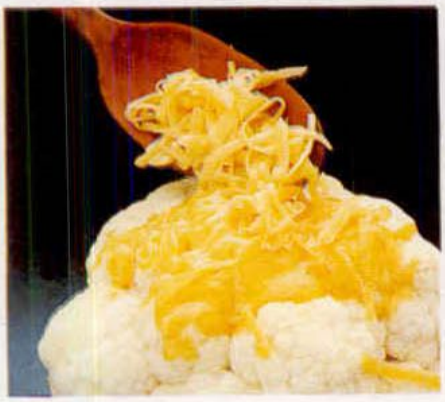
How to microwave spinach



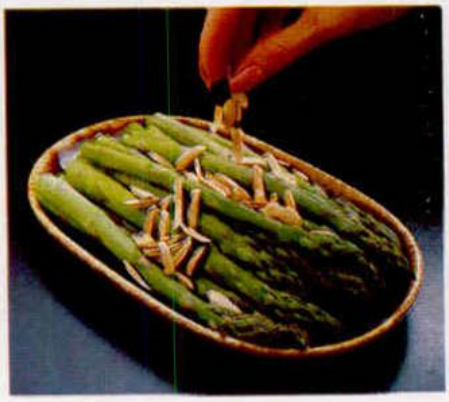
Wash *450g / 1lb spinach, remove tough stalks and tear leaves roughly into pieces and shake off excess moisture. Cover with cling film and microwave on 100% (High) for 3 minutes.*

Stir *and microwave for a further 3-4 minutes or until tender. Exact time depends on the spinach.*

Dressing up vegetables



Sprinkle *grated cheese over hot cauliflower or broccoli. Microwave for a few seconds if necessary, until the cheese is melted and bubbling.*



Microwave *slivered almonds in a little melted butter for 2-3 minutes. Sprinkle over asparagus, celery, beans, broccoli or peas.*

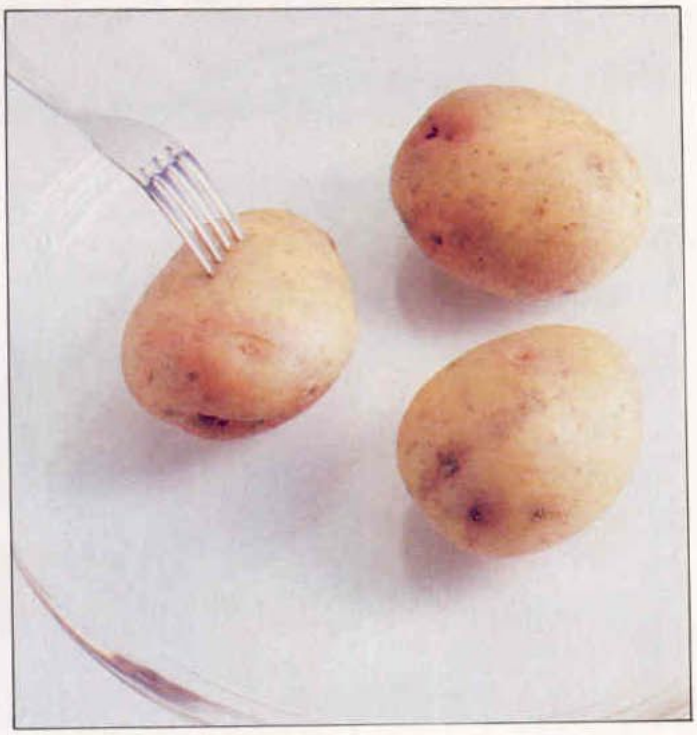
Microwave *streaky bacon between sheets of absorbent paper until crisp, crumble and sprinkle over beans, cabbage, potatoes, cauliflower or celery.*

Vegetables: 10 golden rules

1 **Large** *pieces take longer to cook than small ones, as well as being more likely to cook unevenly. Keep pieces uniform in size and thickness for even microwaving.*

2 **Increase** *microwaving time with the amount of food cooked. Small or medium amounts of food use energy most efficiently. Rotate whole vegetables during cooking.*

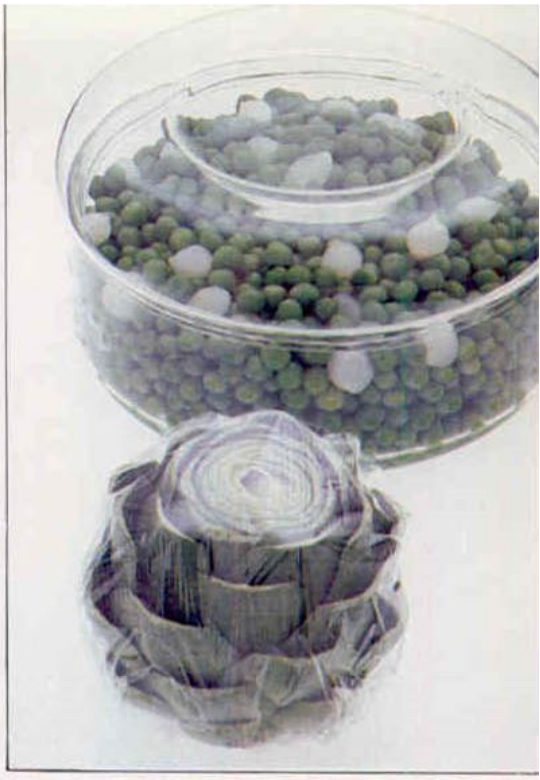
3 **Arrange** *tender asparagus tips and broccoli tops towards the centre of the dish; these parts of the vegetables are less dense and need less energy to cook than the tougher stalks.*



4 **Use** *a fork to prick or pierce whole vegetables which are cooked in their skins to allow excess steam to escape. This will prevent the vegetables splitting or bursting.*

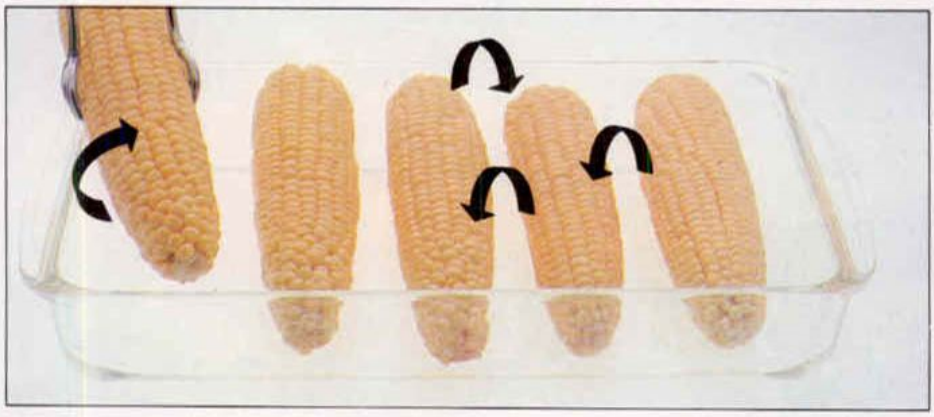
Microtips

If you prefer vegetables to be soft when cooked, add more water and microwave a little longer. Canned vegetables can be microwaved too, using a little of the can juices for moisture. But remember they are already cooked and need only enough time to reheat; do not overcook them or they will become very soggy.



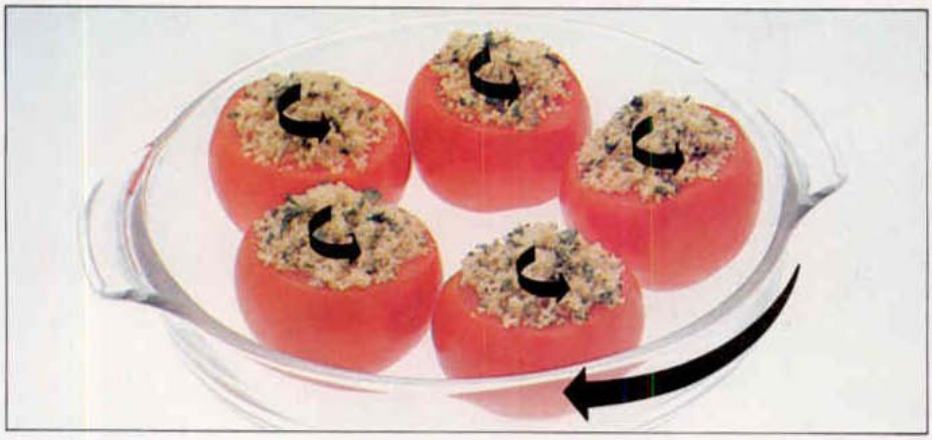
5 **Standing time** *allows vegetables to become tender without losing their texture. If large vegetables are microwaved until the centre is tender the outside becomes mushy.*

6 **Cover** *dish and use a minimum of water. Wrap whole vegetables in cling film.*



7 **Turn over** *and rearrange large, whole vegetables. If they are stacked in the dish arrange them from top to bottom as well as side to centre, so that all receive equal energy.*

8 **Salt** *vegetables after cooking, or dissolve salt in the water before adding.*



9 **Arrange** *whole or halved vegetables in a ring, leaving the centre open. Rotate both the vegetables and the dish partway through the microwaving time for even cooking.*

10 **Stir** *small loose vegetables from outside to centre once or twice to distribute heat.*

STAR RECIPE

Chocolate ice cream cake

This rich moist cake with its chocolate coating and surprise ice cream and raspberry filling makes a truly delicious treat.

175g / 6oz caster sugar
175g / 6oz soft tub margarine or softened butter
3 eggs
175g / 6oz self-raising flour
pinch of salt
75g / 3oz cocoa powder
150ml / 5fl oz milk
500ml / 17fl oz vanilla ice cream
125g / 4oz frozen raspberries

CHOCOLATE COATING
125g / 4oz plain chocolate
60ml / 4tbls golden syrup
15ml / 1tbls single cream

TO DECORATE
65ml / 2½fl oz double cream, whipped
few frozen raspberries, thawed

This cake has been tested on all four standard wattages. See the cooking times below.
700 watts 8½ mins
650 watts 10 mins
600 watts 10-12 mins
500 watts 12-13 mins

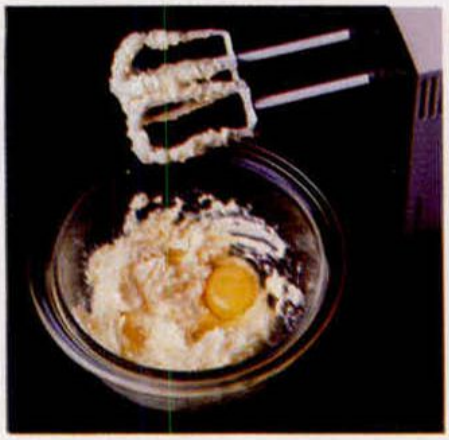
SERVES 8

8½ mins

How to microwave Chocolate ice cream cake

Standing time: 10 mins

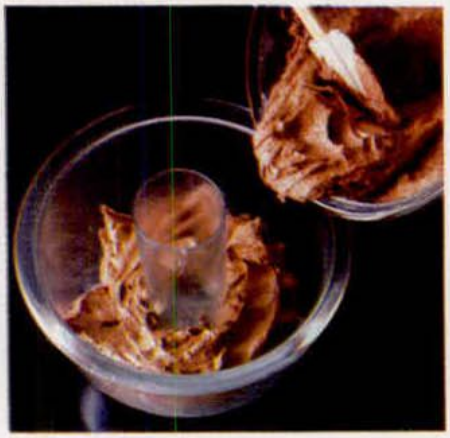
Cream *the caster sugar and soft tub margarine or softened butter together in a large bowl using a wooden spoon or electric beater, until the mixture becomes light and fluffy.*



Add *the eggs to the creamed mixture, adding them one at a time. Beat the mixture well with a wooden spoon or electric beater after each addition to ensure the eggs are well blended.*

Sift *together the flour, salt and cocoa powder. Using a spatula or metal spoon, fold the sifted ingredients into the creamed mixture, a little at a time, alternately with the milk, until completely combined.*

Pour *the mixture into a greased 2L / 3½pt decorative ring mould (or use a glass bowl, see next step). Smooth the surface of the mixture with the back of a spoon or a knife until quite even.*



If *you have no ring mould, use a 2.3L / 4pt bowl and stand a straight-sided glass or jar, open end up, in the middle of the bowl. Grease both bowl and glass and pour the mixture round the glass.*

Stand *the mould on an upturned plate and microwave at 100% (High) for 8½ minutes, rotating the mould ¼ turn every 3 minutes. Leave to stand for 10 minutes, then loosen edges with a knife and turn out to cool on a rack.*

Crown roast of pork

70 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

Large joints such as a crown roast will colour naturally in the microwave, unlike smaller cuts which need to be browned after cooking or cooked in a browning dish.

2.8-3.3kg / 6-7lb prepared crown roast of pork with 16-18 bones
5ml / 1tsp dried marjoram
5ml / 1tsp celery salt
2.5ml / ½tsp poultry seasoning
watercress sprigs, to garnish

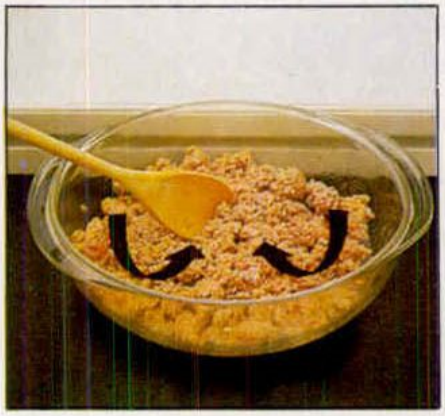
STUFFING
225g / 8oz minced pork
2 celery stalks, thinly sliced
1 onion, chopped
50g / 2oz butter
125g / 4oz bread, cut into 6mm / ¼in cubes
3 spiced peach halves (see box)
50g / 2oz raisins
45ml / 3tbls chopped parsley
4ml / ¾tsp poultry seasoning
salt and pepper

Spiced peaches

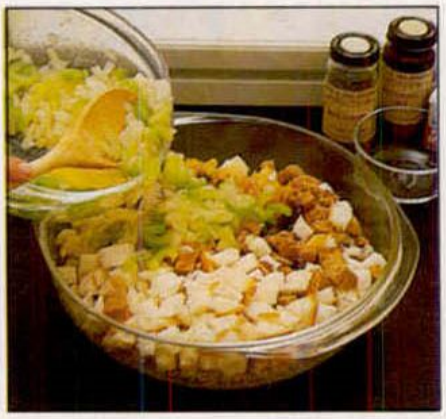
Spiced peaches are used in the stuffing for the crown roast and also to garnish the cooked joint. To prepare them, place 2 x 425g / 15oz cans peach halves and their syrup in a large shallow dish with 6 cloves, 2.5ml / ½tsp ground nutmeg and 2.5ml / ½tsp ground cinnamon. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 8 minutes. Leave immersed in the syrup until required. If preferred, use canned whole apricots.

How to microwave Crown roast of pork

SERVES 8



Prepare *the stuffing for the crown roast before starting to cook the roast. Place the minced pork in a large bowl and microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, stirring with a wooden spoon after 2½ minutes. Set aside while preparing the celery and onion for the stuffing.*



Put *the celery, onion and butter in a bowl, cover with cling film and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, or until tender. Add to the pork with the remaining stuffing ingredients. Set aside. Combine the marjoram, celery salt and poultry seasoning in a bowl.*

Place *the joint, bone ends down, on a roasting rack and rub in the seasoning mixture. Calculate cooking time at 10 minutes per 450g / 1lb at 100% (High). To microwave at 50% (Medium), allow 15 minutes per 450g / 1lb, starting the power at 100% (High) for first 5 minutes only.*

Cook *for half the time, then turn the joint over and fill the cavity with the stuffing. Cover stuffing with cling film. Microwave for the remaining time, or until the internal temperature reaches 75°C / 170°F.*

Leave *the joint on the roasting rack and cover loosely with a piece of foil to keep warm while it is left standing. Leave to stand for 10 minutes, to allow the residual heat to finish cooking the meat completely.*

Place *the crown on a serving dish and decorate the ends of the bones with paper frills. Arrange the spiced peaches and watercress sprigs around the joint attractively. Carve down between each of the chops to serve.*

Pastry and sweet flans

Microwave cooking is perfect for unfilled shortcrust pastry cases. It takes only 5 minutes to cook crisp pastry for sweet flans and savoury quiches.

Shortcrust pastry cooked without a filling becomes crisp and has just as good a flavour as pastry cooked in a conventional oven, but it does not become brown. Other types of pastry cannot be cooked successfully as the pastry will not become crisp in the microwave cooker.

A cooked pastry case can be filled and eaten cold or filled and reheated in the microwave.

Uncooked filled pastry cases or double crust pies are not successful as the water content in the filling turns to steam in the microwave cooker and makes the pastry wet and soggy. With a double crust pie, the filling cooks more rapidly than the pastry and is ready long before the pastry has a chance to cook through.

For perfect, even cooking, shield the sides of a pastry case with a double thickness strip of foil. This prevents the sides overcooking before the base is ready.

To ensure crisp pastry, the base should be covered with absorbent paper. This soaks up the moisture as it is driven to the surface.

Strawberry Glacé Pie

Orange mousse surprise

5½ mins

Standing time: none

1 egg separated
25g / 1oz light soft brown sugar
20g / ¾oz ground hazelnuts
15g / ½oz fine brown breadcrumbs
15g / ½oz plain chocolate, grated

ORANGE MOUSSE
4 oranges
4 eggs
100g / 4oz caster sugar
20g / ¾oz gelatine
300ml / ½pt double cream, whipped

CREAM TOPPING
200ml / 7fl oz whipped cream
25ml / 1fl oz cointreau
50g / 2oz plain chocolate, melted

SERVES 8

Microtip

Melting chocolate in a microwave is so simple — it does away with the need for a double boiler or a bowl over a saucepan of water. Chocolate is delicate, so take care not to overheat it. Microwave it at 50% (Medium) for 2¼ minutes. If it becomes too cool to pipe, reheat for a few seconds.

How to microwave Orange mousse surprise

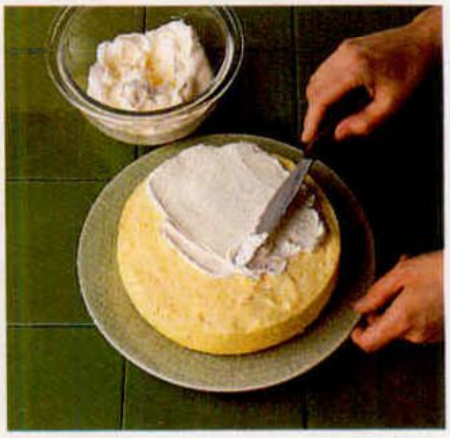
Line *a 20cm / 8in pie plate or dish with cling film. Cream the egg yolk and sugar until pale and thick. Stir in the hazelnuts and breadcrumbs and grated chocolate. Whisk the egg white until stiff but not dry, then fold into the mixture. Spread evenly in the base of the pie plate, pressing it down well.*

Microwave *the biscuit base at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes until crisp and dry. Lift off the plate carefully, using the ends of the cling film to support the biscuit base. Leave to cool on a wire rack while preparing the orange mousse, then peel off the cling film when the biscuit is cold.*

Place *the 4 whole, unpeeled oranges in the microwave cooker and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes. Warming the oranges like this produces more juice when they are squeezed. Squeeze the oranges and measure 225ml / 8fl oz of the juice. Grate the orange zest from all 4 oranges into a small bowl.*

Whisk *together the eggs and sugar until thick and mousse-like. Soak the gelatine in 60ml / 4tbls of orange juice for 1-2 minutes. Microwave at 100% (High) for 30-45 seconds until melted. Stir into the mousse mixture with the remaining orange juice and zest. Fold in the whipped cream.*

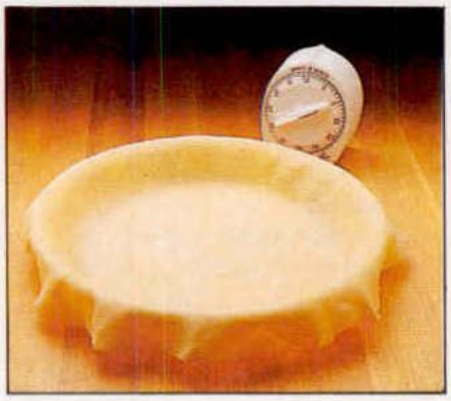
Place *the cooled biscuit base in the bottom of a 20cm / 8in spring-form tin and pour in the orange mousse. Spread the top evenly with the back of a knife and leave the mousse to chill in the refrigerator overnight. Unclip the sides of the tin and transfer the orange mousse to a serving plate.*



Mix *the cream and cointreau and spread over the top and sides of the mousse. Pour the chocolate into a small greaseproof piping bag, snip off the end and pipe 3 circles at equal distances around the top. Carefully pull a skewer from the centre to the edge at intervals to give a spider's web effect (see page 43).*

How to line a pie dish

Unfold *the pastry and fit it loosely into the dish. Pat out any air pockets on the bottom. Lift the sides and let them fall gently into the dish. Do not stretch the dough or it will shrink during cooking.*

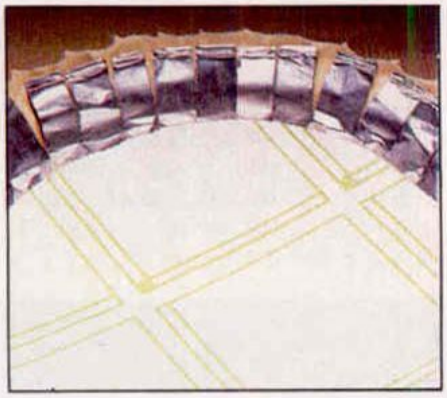


Leave *the pastry to relax in a cool place or in the refrigerator for 10 minutes to prevent it shrinking while cooking. If put in the refrigerator, it will take a little longer to cook.*

Trim *the pastry overhang, using kitchen scissors, to a generous 1cm / ½in to allow for a high rim. Using fingers, fold the pastry to form a high standing rim all around the top.*

Place *the left index finger inside the rim and the right thumb and index finger on the outside of the rim. Push the pastry into a 'V' shape every 1cm / ½in. Pinch to make sharp edges.*

Prick *the pastry case continuously at the bend of the dish with a fork, then make pricks on the bottom and sides of the pastry, 1cm / ½in apart to ensure even cooking in the microwave.*



Line *the sides of the pastry case with a double strip of foil, slitting the foil at 1cm / ½in intervals if sides slope. Cover base of pastry with 2 layers of absorbent paper.*

How to microwave a pastry case

Place *the dish on an upturned plate in the microwave cooker. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes, rotating the dish ¼ turn every minute.*

Remove *the foil and paper; microwave for 2-3 minutes. Check readiness before minimum time by looking through the base. It should appear opaque.*

Microtip

Brown spots may appear on the surface of the pastry after the first part of the cooking. You will discover these when the absorbent paper and foil strip are removed. They occur in 'hot spots' in the oven where microwaves continuously bounce off the same spot, causing over-cooking. They will also occur where butter has not been well incorporated during the preparation stage and so attracts a concentration of microwaves.

To protect these areas, cover them with small pieces of foil for the remaining half of the cooking time.

Pepper soufflé omelette

5½ mins

Standing time: none

Serve your omelette plain or with one of the fillings. Keep the ingredients in the storecupboard or refrigerator and you'll always be able to produce a quick meal for unexpected guests.

4 large eggs
60ml / 4tbls milk
salt
pepper
15g / ½oz butter or margarine

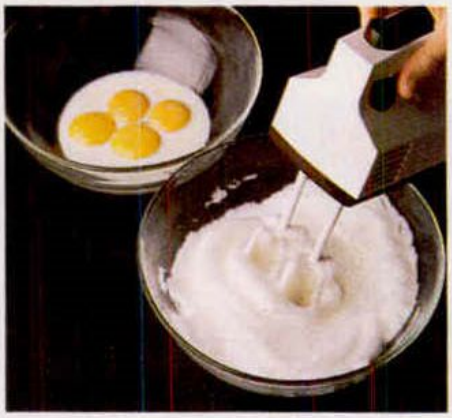
FILLING
¼ green pepper, diced.
¼ red pepper, diced.
2 spring onions, finely chopped
50g / 2oz cheese, grated

SERVES 2

VARIATIONS
Use one or more of the following fillings instead of or as well as the pepper filling:
Ham soufflé omelette: add 50g / 2oz chopped ham to the omelette before folding.
Herb soufflé omelette: fold finely chopped fresh herbs into the omelette mixture before microwaving. Alternatively, sprinkle over the omelette before serving.
Bacon soufflé omelette: place 4 rashers of bacon in microwave on double layer of absorbent paper. Cover with single layer of absorbent paper. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes or until crisp. Chop and add bacon to omelette before folding and serve immediately.
Mushroom soufflé omelette: wipe and slice 100g / 4oz mushrooms. Place in a bowl with 15g / ½oz butter or margarine. Cover with a lid or cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for about 3 minutes or until tender. Add to omelette before folding and serving.

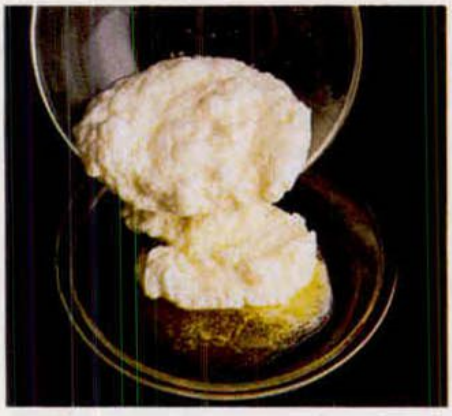
How to microwave a soufflé omelette

Separate *the eggs, taking care not to allow any yolk to mix with the whites or they will not beat stiffly. Place the whites in a 1.1L / 2pt mixing bowl and the yolks in a separate bowl about the same size.*



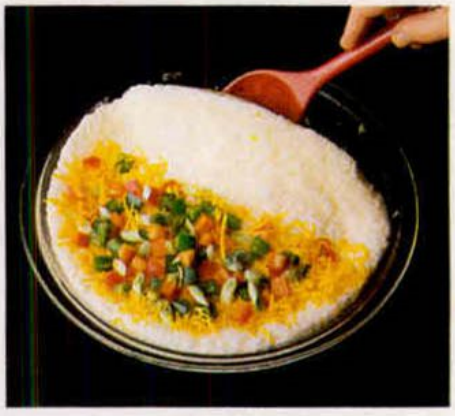
Beat *the eggs whites together until they are stiff but not dry. The mixture should form soft peaks. In the other bowl, blend the egg yolks with the milk, salt and pepper until they are well incorporated.*

Stir *15ml / 1tbls of the beaten egg whites into the yolk mixture, then very gently fold in the rest of the whites, using a metal spoon. Take care not to overmix or the omelette will not rise to its full extent.*



Place *the butter in a 25cm / 10in shallow pie dish; microwave at 100% (High) for 30-45 seconds until melted. Pour in the eggs. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 3-5 minutes until the mixture is partially set.*

Lift *the edges of the partially cooked omelette with the spatula so that the uncooked portion spreads evenly. Microwave for a further 2-3 minutes until the centre is set. It does not require standing time.*



Sprinkle *the filling of your choice over half the omelette. Loosen the omelette from the bottom of the dish with the spatula and fold carefully in half without breaking it. Gently slide on to a serving plate.*

Sweet French toast

5½ mins

Standing time: none

15g / ½oz butter
1 egg
15ml / 1tbls milk
2.5ml / ½tsp icing sugar
pinch of ground cinnamon
pinch of salt
2 x 2.5cm / 1in-thick slices of French bread

SERVES 1

1 Place the butter in a small bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds or until melted.
2 In a larger bowl, beat together the egg, milk, sugar, cinnamon and salt. Beat in the butter.
3 Pre-heat a browning dish at 100% (High) for 4 minutes. Soak the bread in the egg mixture.
4 Arrange the bread slices in the heated browning dish, gently pressing down with a spatula. Microwave at 100% (High) for 30 seconds.
5 Turn and rearrange the bread slices. Microwave for a further 30-45 seconds or until light brown and set. Serve with warm syrup.

French toast for two: Double all ingredients. Prepare as above up to Step 5. Turn and rearrange the bread slices and microwave for 30-60 seconds.

Broccoli omelette

6½ mins

Standing time: none

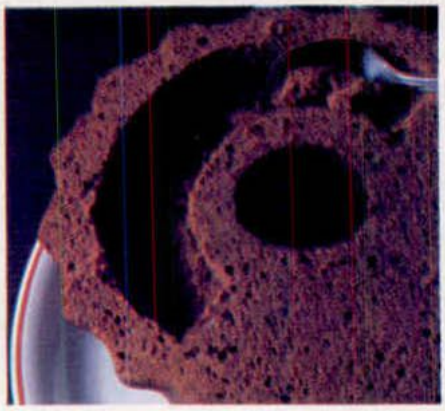
1 soufflé omelette
75g / 3oz cooked broccoli, chopped
25g / 1oz Gruyère or Mozzarella cheese, thinly sliced

SERVES 2

1 Prepare a soufflé omelette according to the step-by-step instructions on the opposite page.
2 Arrange the chopped broccoli as evenly as possible on the omelette and top with the strips of cheese, placed one next to the other, roughly evenly spaced.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute or until the cheese melts. Serve immediately so the omelette does not have time to sink.

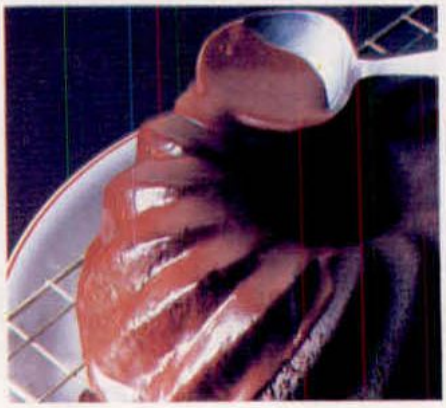
How to fill Chocolate ice cream cake

Cut *off the bottom quarter of the cake with a sharp knife and set aside. Remove centre of cake by cutting 1cm / ½in in from inner and outer edges to within 2.5cm / 1in of the top.*



Scoop *out the inside with a spoon leaving 2.5cm / 1in of cake on the top. Freeze the cake for at least 1 hour until firm. Use the cake crumbs for another recipe.*

Place *ice cream in a bowl and microwave at 30% (Low) for 30-60 seconds. Stir in raspberries, spoon into the cake, replace the base and turn the cake over.*



Break *chocolate into small bowl and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 4 minutes. Add syrup and cream, spoon over cake. Freeze; refrigerate 45 minutes before serving, then decorate.*

How to make chocolate cake using cake mix

2 packets chocolate cake mix with any added ingredients according to manufacturer's instructions
60ml / 4tbls extra milk
filling, coating and decoration, as main recipe (see page 27)

1 Grease a 2L / 3½pt decorative ring mould or alternative mould (see steps, page 27). Prepare the cake mix according to the manufacturer's instructions, adding the extra milk.
2 Pour the mixture into the mould and place in the microwave cooker on an upturned plate.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 8½ minutes, rotating the dish ¼ turn every 3 minutes until the cake pulls away from the side of the mould. Leave to stand for 10 minutes until fully cooked. Carefully loosen the edges with a knife and turn the cake out onto a wire rack to cool before filling. Fill and decorate as the main recipe (see left).

VARIATION
This cake can be served as an everyday chocolate cake without the filling if you wish. Cover with chocolate coating and decorate with nuts. It can also be made using a plain sponge cake mix instead of chocolate.

Alternative fillings

Liqueur For a special occasion, stir 15-30ml / 1-2tbls kirsch into the softened ice cream and mix well before stirring in the frozen raspberries.

Choc-mint Fill cake with choc-mint ice cream and decorate top with chocolate coating, as main recipe, and chopped mixed nuts.

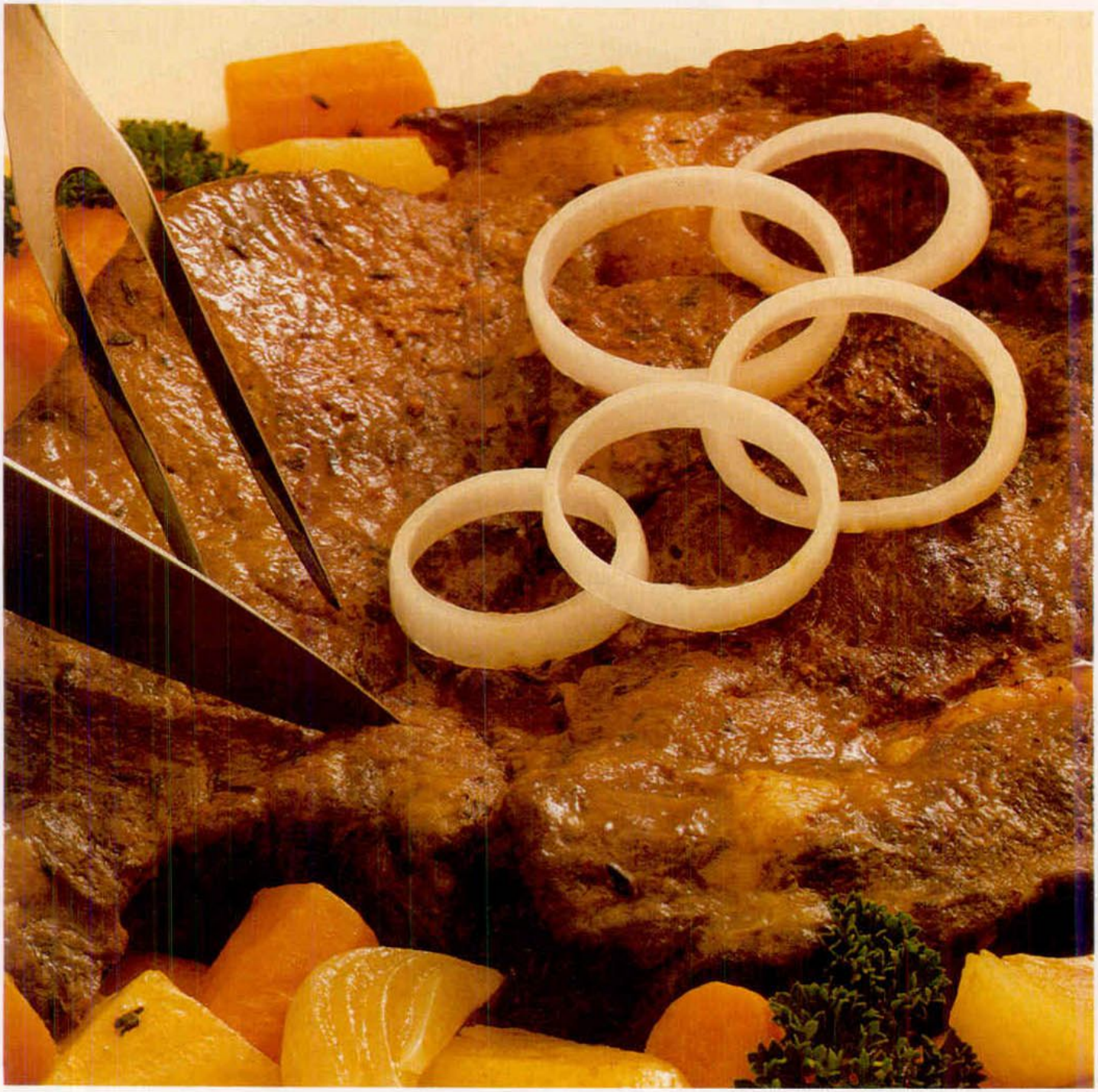
Orange Fill the cake with orange sorbet. Decorate with icing made with 225g / 8oz sieved icing sugar mixed with 30-45ml / 2-3tbls orange juice. Decorate with julienne strips of orange rind.

Braising beef

Topside and silverside joints of beef cooked in a small amount of liquid in the microwave will be every bit as tender and juicy as when cooked in a conventional oven.

For a lean, reasonably tender cut such as topside or silverside, microwave-braising or pot roasting are the perfect cooking methods.

If you have a cooker with variable power controls, this is where it comes into its own; the slower you can cook it, the better the finished dish will be. You also need less added liquid than for conventional methods of braising, because there is little evaporation, so the juices in the finished dish will taste really meaty. As with conventional cooking, these cuts can also benefit from preliminary marinating in oil, wine and spices.



Shortcrust pastry case

5 mins

Standing time: none

A shortcrust pastry case for sweet or savoury pies and flans cooks perfectly in the microwave. Follow the step-by-step guide below.

50g / 2oz butter or margarine
25g / 1oz lard
175g / 6oz plain flour
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
45ml / 3tbls cold water

• MAKES A 23cm / 9in CASE

DO

- Cook pastry cases unfilled, then fill and reheat as necessary.
- Use a mixture of plain and wholemeal flour for colour.
- Add drops of yellow food colouring for stronger colour.
- Prick base of pastry case very thoroughly for even cooking.
- Cover base with double layer of absorbent paper to absorb steam and produce crisp pastry.
- Shield sides of case with foil to prevent overcooking.

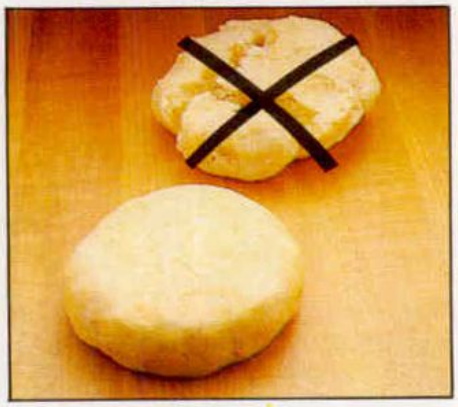
DON'T

- Microwave raw pastry with a filling as the steam from the filling makes the pastry soggy.
- Make double crust pies for the same reason. The filling will also cook before the pastry.
- Cook choux or puff pastry as they will not become crisp.
- Add sugar to pastry when it is going to be cooked in a microwave, it causes pastry to burn.
- Use baking beans to weight down the pastry as you would normally when baking blind.

How to make shortcrust pastry

Cut *the butter or margarine and lard into the flour and salt in a bowl or large jug until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Use the lowest speed on a mixer, or use a pastry blender to do this, if preferred.*

Sprinkle *over the cold water, stirring lightly with a fork, until the mixture clings together and forms a ball. (Add the water a little at a time, you may not need to use all of it and once added it is too late to remove any.)*



Add *just the right amount of water. Too little makes a dry dough which is hard to roll out and cracks around the edge. Too much makes a very sticky dough. Either will result in an unpleasantly tough pastry.*

Form *into a ball on a floured surface. Flatten to a thickness of 1cm / ½in. Roll out to a circle 3mm / ⅛in thick and 5cm / 2in larger than the top of the dish.*

To *maintain the pastry dough in a circular shape and keep it an even thickness, roll only from the centre out towards the edge all the way round the pastry circle.*

Transfer *the rolled out pastry circle to the pie dish by folding it in half and then in half again. Placing both hands underneath it, carefully lift on to the dish without tearing.*

Fruity pot roast

52 mins

Standing time: 8 mins

900g-1.6kg / 2-3½lb topside of beef, trimmed of excess fat and cut into 2×4cm / 1½in thick slices
75ml / 3fl oz orange juice
30ml / 2tbls barbecue sauce
15ml / 1tbls soy sauce
5ml / 1tsp finely grated orange zest
salt and pepper
210g / 7½oz can sliced mushrooms, drained
1 onion, sliced
65ml / 2½fl oz water
22.5ml / 1½tbls cornflour
15g / ½oz light brown sugar
1 orange, thinly sliced
parsley sprigs, to garnish

SERVES 4-8

1 Calculate the meat cooking time at 25-30 minutes per 450g / 1lb. Prick both sides of the meat slices thoroughly with a fork. Place in a 2.5-2.8L / 4½-5pt casserole dish.
2 Combine orange juice, barbecue and soy sauces, orange zest and seasoning. Pour over the meat, then add mushrooms and onion.
3 Cover with the lid or cling film, rolling back one edge a little, and microwave at 50% (Medium) for calculated time, or until meat is tender. Turn the meat over halfway through the cooking time.
4 Combine the water, cornflour and sugar in a measuring jug and pour in enough of the cooking juices to measure 300ml / 11fl oz.
5 Place the orange slices on top of meat, cover loosely with foil and leave to stand for 8 minutes.
6 Meanwhile, microwave the sauce at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes to thicken, stirring once. Stir into remaining meat juices.
7 Slice meat thinly. Garnish with parsley sprigs and serve with the sauce and boiled potatoes.

VARIATION
Substitute lemon zest for the orange zest, 125ml / 4fl oz water and 15ml / 1tbls lemon juice for the orange juice and 2 sliced lemons for the sliced orange.

Microwave *at 50% (Medium) for half the time given in the recipe. Turn the joint over in the casserole or turn the roasting bag, and add the vegetables when specified in the recipe. Cover again or re-tie the roasting bag and finish microwaving.*

Leave *the joint to stand, covered, in the roasting bag or casserole for the time specified in the recipe. This is essential to complete the cooking and improve the flavour. It also makes it easier to carve the joint when serving as the meat has tenderized.*

Strawberry glacé pie

8 mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb fresh strawberries, wiped
23cm / 9in cooked Shortcrust Pastry Case (see page 30)
50g / 2oz sugar
15g / ½oz cornflour
225g / 8oz frozen strawberries, thawed with juice reserved
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
few drops red food colouring (optional)

SERVES 6

1 Pat the fresh strawberries dry and place in the pastry case.
2 In a small bowl, combine the sugar and cornflour. Stir in the frozen strawberries and reserved juice. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until thickened and clear, stirring every minute.
3 Add lemon juice and colouring, if wished. Cool. Spoon over the strawberries to cover.
4 Chill for 2-3 hours.

Digestive crumb case

2 mins

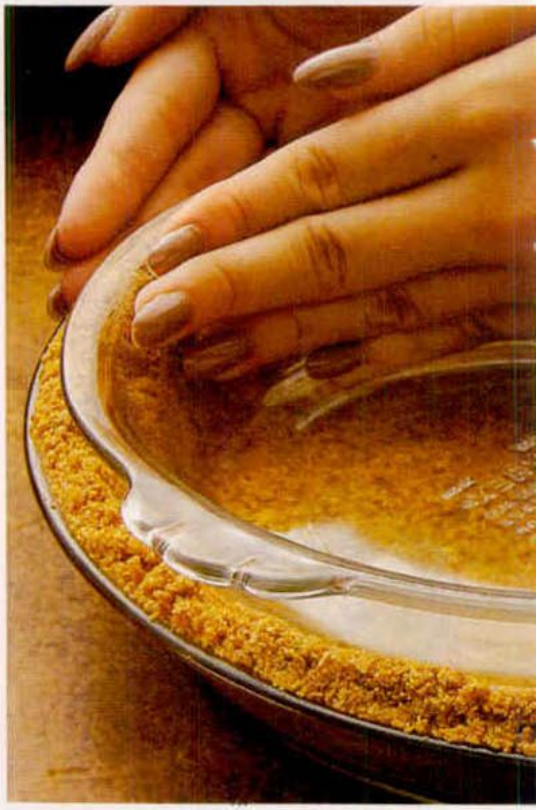
Standing time: none

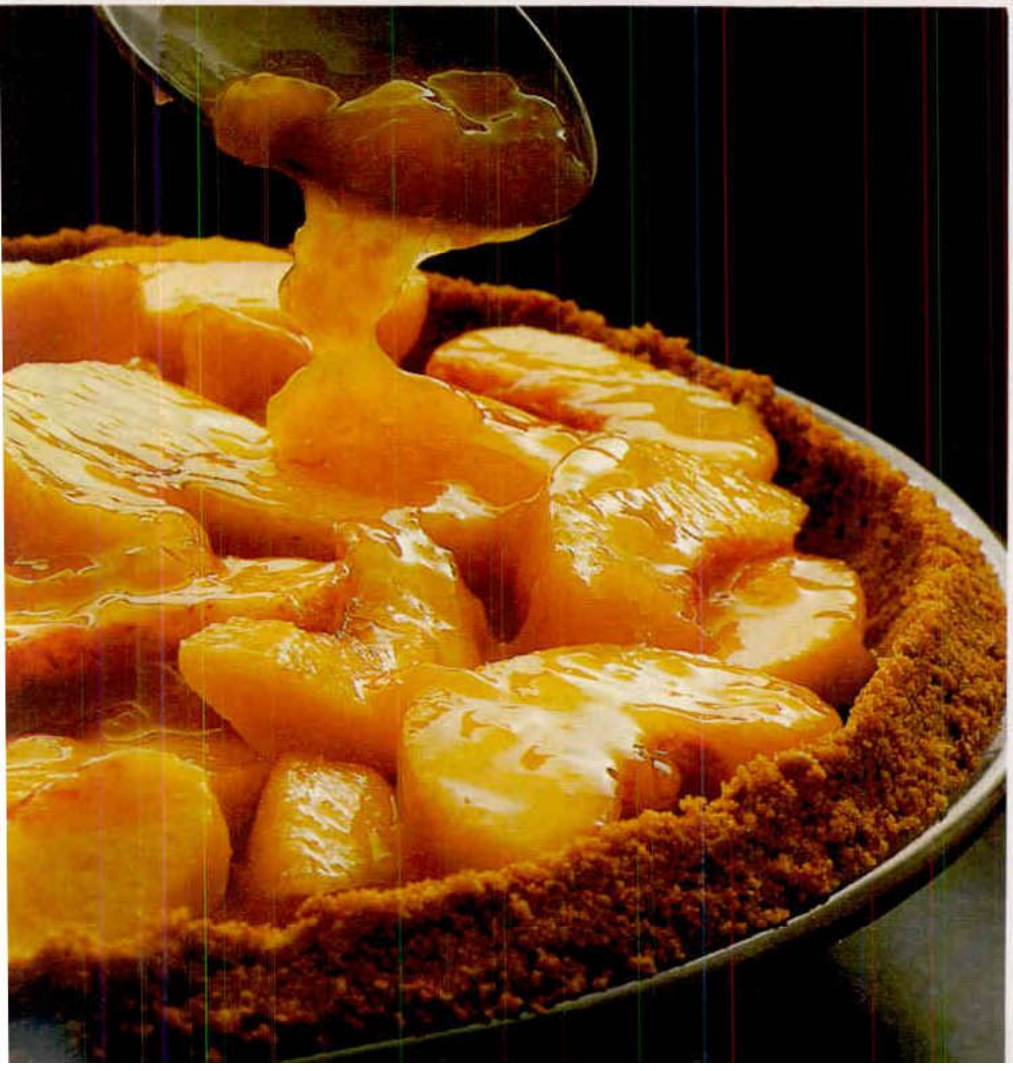
75g / 3oz butter or margarine
225g / 8oz digestive biscuits, crushed
40g / 1½oz demerara or granulated sugar

MAKES A 23cm / 9in CRUMB CASE

1 Melt the butter in a 23cm / 9in pie plate at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds.
2 Stir in the crumbs and sugar, reserving 30ml / 2tbls crumbs for decoration when filled, if wished (see How to microwave Meringue Topping, page 33).
3 Press crumbs firmly and evenly against bottom and sides of plate, using a smaller plate or spoon.
4 Stand the pie dish on an upturned plate and microwave at 100% (High) for 30 seconds. Rotate the dish ½ turn and microwave for a further 45-60 seconds. Allow to cool before filling as desired.

VARIATION
For a stronger-flavoured base, try using the same amount of crushed ginger biscuits instead of digestive.





Glazed peach pie

4 mins

Standing time: none

23cm / 9in cooked Digestive Crumb Case
5 large peaches, peeled, stoned and sliced
65g / 2½oz sugar
15g / ½oz cornflour
100ml / 3½fl oz water
30ml / 2tbls lemon juice

SERVES 6

1 Mash one fifth of the peach slices.
2 In a small bowl, mix the sugar and cornflour. Stir in the water, lemon juice and mashed peaches.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, or until thickened and clear, stirring every minute.
4 Place remaining peach slices into the crumb case; spoon over the glaze, spreading carefully to cover.
5 Chill for 2-3 hours. To serve, top with whipped cream or ice cream.

Pizzas from the freezer

From the freezer to the table in under 10 minutes makes a crispy-based, bubbly-topped pizza an even more mouthwatering prospect. Just try it and see.

A frozen pizza makes an excellent supper for those occasions when you arrive home tired and exhausted and feel like 'something simple'.

The microwave cooker makes pizzas not only simple but unbelievably quick to produce. Within minutes the pizza can be out of its wrapping, into the cooker and straight on to the table, looking and tasting truly scrumptious.

Pizzas can either be heated on absorbent paper on a plate, in an ordinary microwave browning dish, on a roasting rack, or on a special dish called a pizza browner. This is similar to the ordinary browning dish, but is more suited to the shape of a pizza and has a rim around the bottom, which elevates the dish during cooking and also protects work surfaces from the heat.

Using a browning utensil will ensure that the pizza dough browns nicely on the underside and is good and crunchy to bite. An ordinary microwave-safe dish can be used but will not brown or crisp the pizza.

One large pizza can be microwaved at a time or several mini pizzas. Remember to arrange the mini-pizzas in a circle on the microwaving utensil and to adjust cooking times according to the number of pizzas you are microwaving.

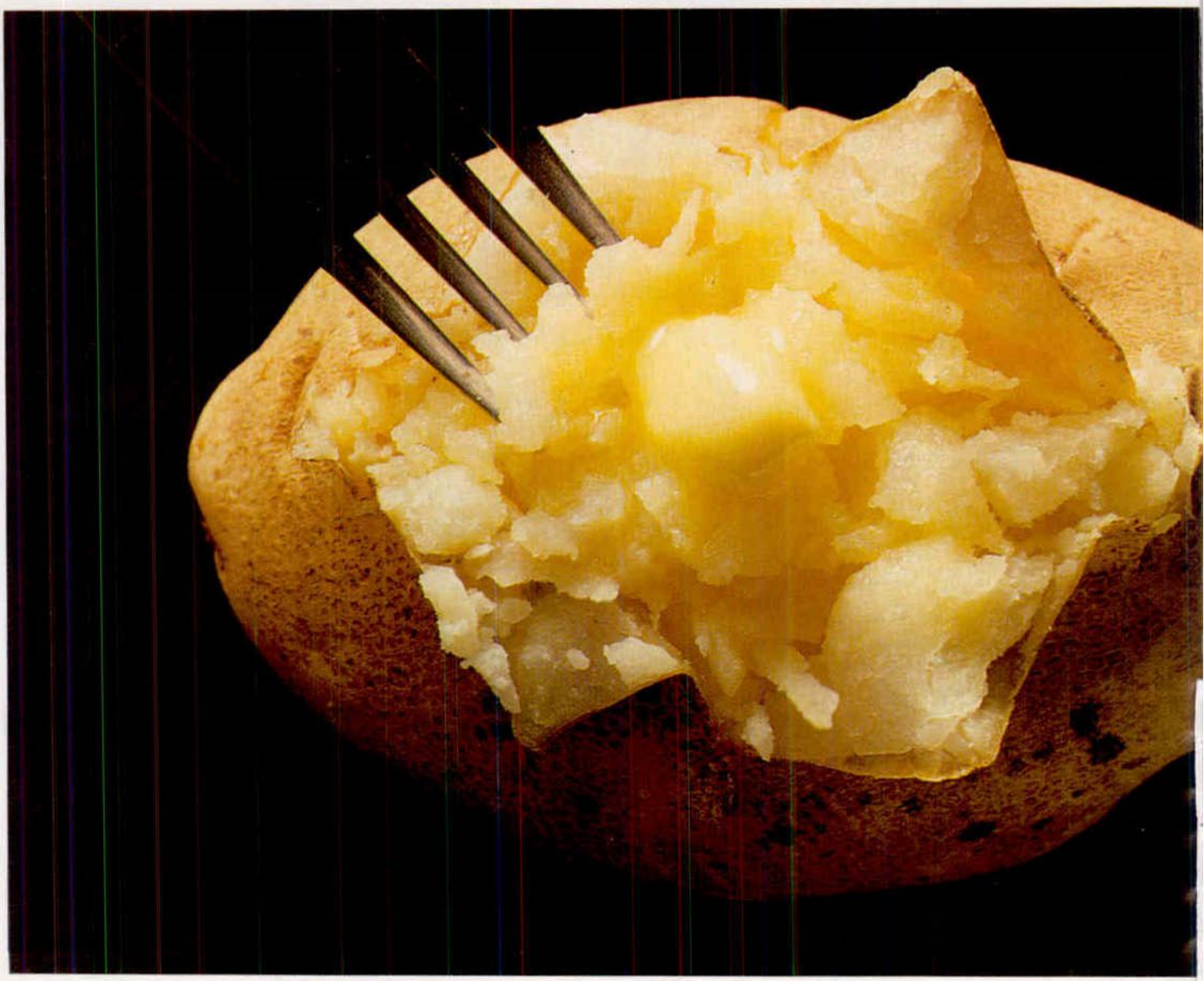
Boiling and baking potatoes

The humble potato is our most versatile vegetable, lending itself to many mouthwatering recipes. You can't fry in the microwave but you can boil or bake any type of potato.

Everybody who buys a microwave has heard the story of the 5-minute baked potato. Is it true? The answer is 'yes' if it is a smallish potato and there is only one to cook. A large 225g / 8oz potato takes 7 minutes, and standing time is important to complete cooking without over-softening the outside. Each time you add another potato the cooking time increases. Microwave-baked potatoes are soft and fluffy inside, but the skins do not crisp and brown as in the dry heat of a conventional oven.

When cooking potatoes in their skins, prick them thoroughly to allow the steam to escape — otherwise the potatoes will burst. Arrange several potatoes in a circle, turning them and rearranging them to ensure even cooking. Do not try placing a potato in the centre of the ring as it will not cook as quickly as the others. Choose even-sized potatoes.

When boiling potatoes, the secret is to cut them into even-size pieces. Small new potatoes can be cooked whole, in their skins if you prick them. Older potatoes should be cut up; small cubes or thin slices cook more quickly than larger pieces. Stir pieces during cooking to encourage even cooking.



Pineapple lemon pie

15 mins

Standing time: none

225g / 8oz caster sugar
50g / 2oz cornflour
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
225ml / 8fl oz cold water
225g / 8oz can crushed pineapple
3 egg yolks
juice and zest of 2 lemons
20g / ¾oz butter, diced
23cm / 9in cooked Shortcrust Pastry Case (see page 30)

SERVES 6

1 In a small mixing bowl, combine the sugar, cornflour, salt and 50ml / 2floz water. Stir in the remaining water and pineapple.
2 Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 6-8 minutes, or until thickened and clear, stirring every 2-3 minutes.
3 Mix a little of the hot mixture into the egg yolks in a small bowl, then stir into the pineapple mixture. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute.
4 Stir in the lemon zest and juice and the butter. Cool slightly, then pour into the cooked pastry case. Top with meringue (see below) and microwave as directed.

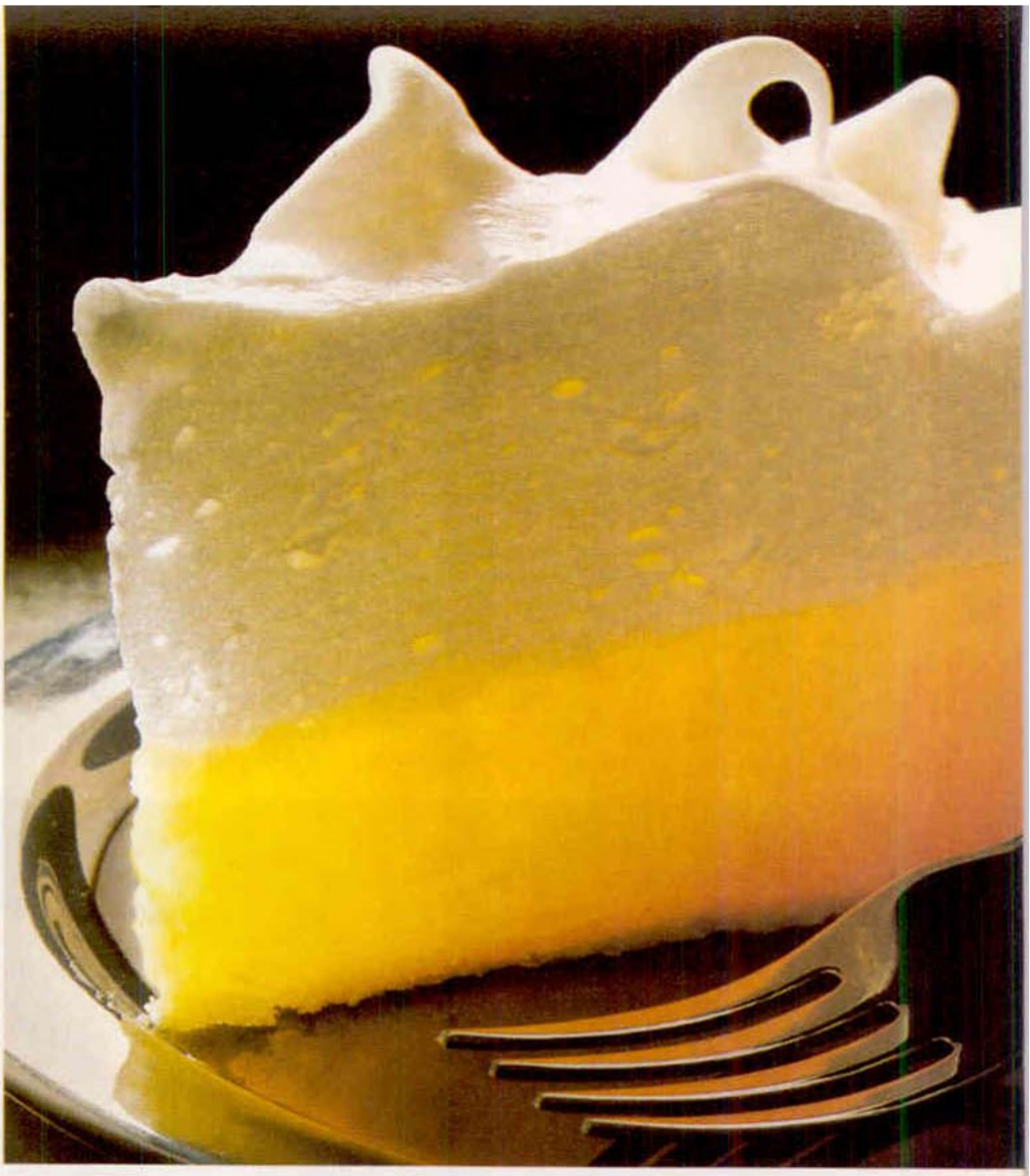
VARIATION
Lemon Meringue Pie: omit the crushed pineapple and increase the cold water to 400ml / 14floz.

Meringue Topping

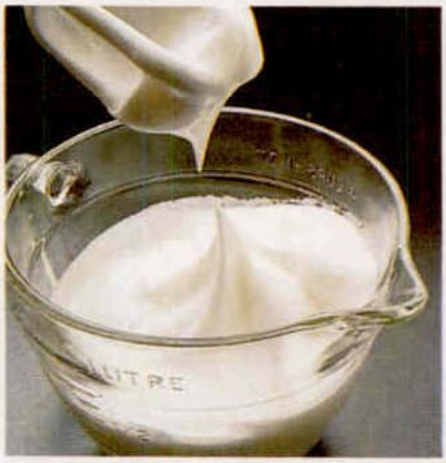
3 egg whites
5ml / 1tsp cornflour
1.5ml / ¼ tsp cream of tartar
90ml / 6tbls caster sugar
30ml / 2tbls digestive biscuit crumbs (optional)

Microtip

An egg white at room temperature will whisk to a greater volume than a cold egg. To bring a refrigerated egg to room temperature, microwave the whole egg at 100% (High) for 5 seconds only. Do not microwave for longer or the egg may explode.



How to microwave Meringue topping



Beat *the egg whites, cornflour and cream of tartar in a bowl or jug until standing in soft peaks. Add the sugar, 15ml / 1tbls at a time, beating until straight peaks form when the beaters are raised. Spread over the filling, taking it to the pastry edge. Sprinkle over the biscuit crumbs if using.*

Microwave *at 50% (Medium) for 3-6 minutes until the meringue has set, rotating the dish ½ turn after half the cooking time. If browned meringue is preferred, microwave for only 3-4 minutes, then place under a pre-heated grill for 2-4 minutes. Watch the meringue closely to make sure it does not burn.*

Spanish potatoes

10 mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb even-sized potatoes, scrubbed and cut into 1cm / ½in slices
1 small garlic clove, crushed
30ml / 2tbls olive or cooking oil
125g / 4oz mushrooms, sliced
1 small onion, sliced and separated into rings
salt and pepper

SERVES 4

1 In a 1.7L / 3pt dish, combine the potatoes, garlic and oil. Cover with a lid or cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 6 minutes, stirring after half the cooking time.
2 Add all the remaining ingredients, seasoning lightly. Re-cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes or until the vegetables are tender, stirring once.

Stuffed potatoes

14 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

4 large potatoes, each weighing about 225g / 8oz
150ml / ¼pt soured cream
90ml / 6tbls milk
30ml / 2tbls grated Parmesan cheese
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
pepper
15ml / 1tbls chopped fresh chives or parsley or 5ml / 1tsp dried chives or parsley
paprika, to garnish
30ml / 2tbls flaked almonds (optional)

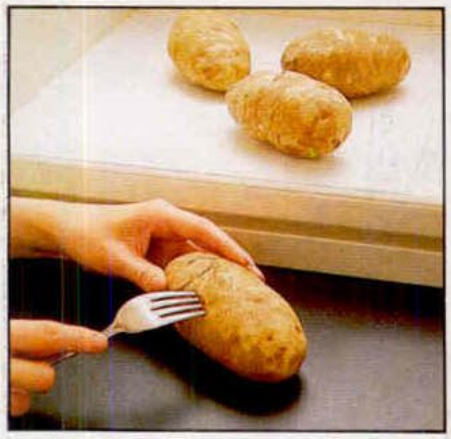
SERVES 4

1 Prick the potatoes all over with a fork. Arrange them 2.5cm / 1in apart on absorbent paper.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 12-15 minutes or until still slightly firm, rearranging after half the cooking time. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes.
3 Cut a thin slice from the top of each potato. Carefully scoop out the flesh into a bowl, without damaging the skins.
4 Mash the potato with the soured cream, milk, cheese, salt, pepper and chives or parsley. Spoon the potato mixture back into the skins.
5 Sprinkle with paprika and almonds if using. Place on a serving plate or absorbent paper in the cooker. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes or until thoroughly heated, rotating plate ½ turn or rearranging after half the cooking time.

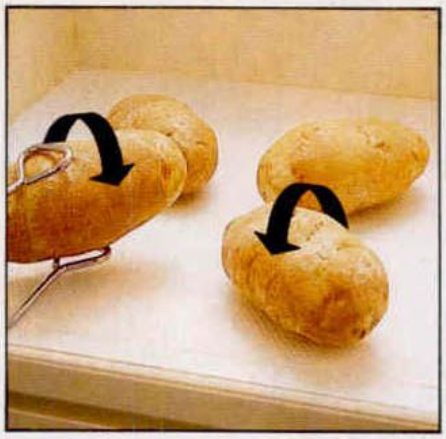
Microtip

The potatoes can be prepared to the end of Step 4 the night before and refrigerated. Add 2 minutes to the reheating time (or 30 seconds per potato if not reheating all of them).

How to microwave-bake potatoes

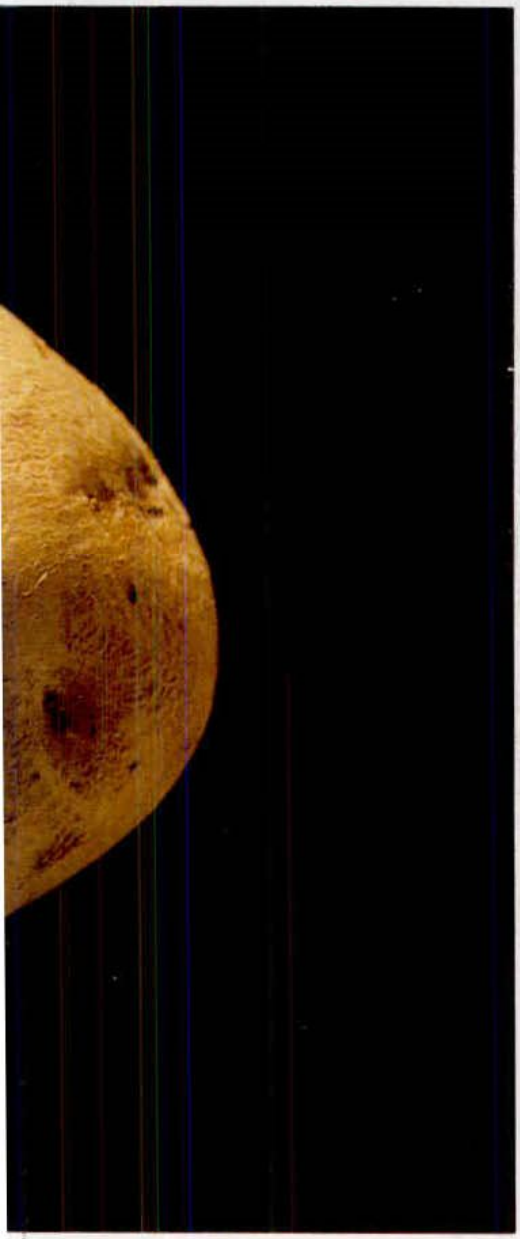


Prick *well-scrubbed medium to large potatoes with a fork. Place them on absorbent paper in the cooker at least 2.5cm / 1in apart.*

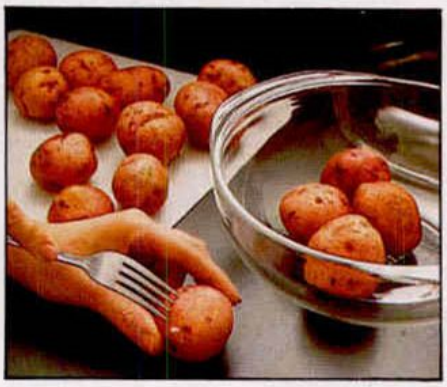


Cook *according to the time given on the chart on page 37, turning potatoes over and rearranging them after half the cooking time.*

Wrap *the potatoes in foil when just tender and leave to stand for 5-10 minutes, until they feel soft. They will have retained their heat well.*

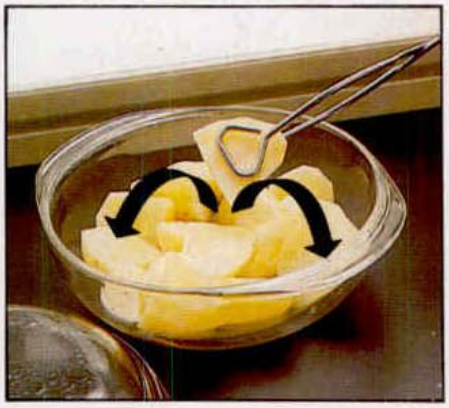


How to microwave-boil potatoes



New potatoes *Scrub, but do not peel. Prick twice with a fork and place in a wide-based dish with 30ml / 2tbls water. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.*

Old potatoes *Peel and cut in quarters, slices or cubes. Combine 60ml / 4tbls water with 1.5ml / ¼tsp salt in a dish, add potatoes; cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.*



Microwave *at 100% (High) until fork-tender (see chart page 37). Stir halfway through cooking. Leave new potatoes to stand for 5 minutes, old for 3 minutes. Drain.*

Microtips

You cannot fry or roast potatoes in the microwave, as cooking in large quantities of fat is dangerous. But if you use the microwave to preheat chips or potato pieces and then fry or roast conventionally, you will save time and produce crisper potatoes.

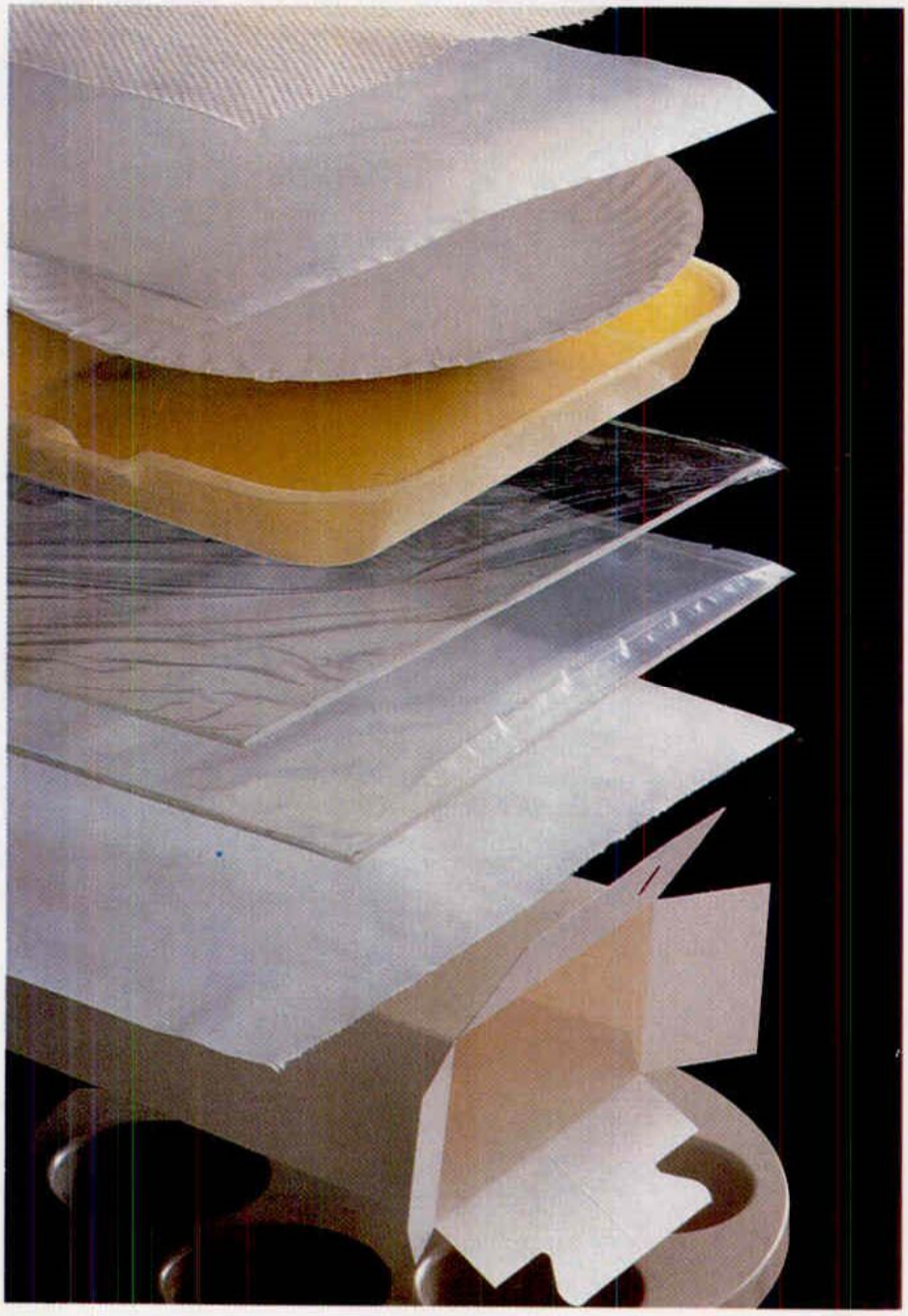
Frozen oven chips can also be microwaved. Preheat a browning dish for 6 minutes; add 30ml / 2tbls oil and 225g / 8oz frozen chips. Microwave at 100% (High) for 7 minutes, stirring halfway through the cooking time.

Cookware: do's and don'ts

When you first start microwave cooking it feels strange not to be using your normal pots and pans. But you will soon discover how versatile microwave cookware is.

Metal utensils cannot be used in a microwave cooker. Metal reflects microwaves, so food in a metal container cannot get hot as the microwaves do not reach it. If you do put metal in the cooker, the reflected energy may cause sparking which will damage the magnetron.

But many quite ordinary materials, like china and glass, paper and plastics can be used. These allow the waves to pass through, so that they heat the food inside. The microwaves do not heat the cooking utensils, but the dishes will become hot from the heat of the food as it cooks.



Do use

The range of cooking dishes and materials that can be used in the microwave cooker is much wider than those which can be used for cooking in a conventional oven and includes unlikely materials such as absorbent paper, cardboard and plastic dishes.

Paper *napkins and absorbent kitchen paper can be used to absorb moisture from the surface of foods like bread and cakes, or fat from bacon. Greaseproof paper offers a less absorbent covering when you want to retain moisture in the food. Paper plates are useful for heating and serving dry foods where temperatures are not too high.*

Plastic *Food storage containers and supermarket packaging are generally suitable for thawing only; they melt or distort when food reaches cooking temperatures. Cling film is ideal used as a cover to hold in steam, tenderizing foods and speeding cooking. Boiling bags and roasting bags can be used for certain foods. Plastic storage bags are not strong enough to withstand the heat of cooked foods.*

Waxed paper and cardboard *These can be used for thawing but not for cooking — the wax will melt in the heat of the food.*

Microwave plastics specially designed for microwave cooking *Many moulds and dishes are made in these materials, and they are usually cheaper than glass or ceramic ones.*

German potato salad

15 mins

Standing time: none

700g / 1½lb potatoes, peeled and cut into 2.5cm / 1in cubes
salt
60ml / 4tbls water
½ onion, finely chopped
3 rashers streaky bacon, cut into thin strips
7.5ml / ½tbls plain flour
60ml / 4tbls cider vinegar
30ml / 2tbls sugar
2.5ml / ½tsp celery seed
freshly ground black pepper

SERVES 4-6

1 Stir together a pinch of salt and the water in a bowl. Add the potatoes and cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 9 minutes. Stand for 3 minutes, then drain.
2 Place the onion and bacon in a 1.7L / 3pt bowl. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes until the onion is tender. Stir once.
3 Blend the flour, potatoes and remaining ingredients into the bacon and onion mixture.
4 Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes, stirring once.

Scalloped potatoes

20¾ mins

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz butter or margarine
25g / 1oz flour
15ml / 1tbls chopped fresh chives or 5ml / 1tsp dried chives
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
2.5ml / ½tsp mustard powder
pepper
425ml / ¾pt milk
700g / 1½lb even-sized potatoes, peeled and cut into 6mm / ¼in slices

SERVES 4-6

1 Microwave the butter in a 1.7L / 3pt bowl at 100% (High) for 45 seconds or until melted. Stir in the flour, chives, salt, mustard powder and pepper. Blend in the milk until smooth.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes or until thickened, stirring every other minute.
3 Mix in the potatoes. Cover with a lid or cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 15 minutes or until the potatoes are tender, stirring twice.

Chunky potato soup

22 mins

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz streaky bacon, cut into thin strips
450g / 1lb potatoes, peeled and cut into 1cm / ½in cubes
2 large celery stalks, chopped
1 onion, chopped
60ml / 4tbls water
pepper
575ml / 1pt milk
25g / 1oz plain flour
½ chicken stock cube (optional)
salt (optional)

SERVES 4-6

1 Microwave the bacon in a covered 1.7L / 3pt bowl at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Drain.
2 Add potatoes, celery, onion, water and pepper; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 10 minutes, stirring once.
3 Blend a little of the milk with the flour to make a smooth cream. Stir flour mixture, remaining milk and stock cube into the potatoes. Add salt if necessary.
4 Microwave, uncovered, for 7 minutes, stirring 2 or 3 times.

Microwave times for potatoes

TYPE	QUANTITY	MICROWAVE TIME AT 100% (HIGH)	PROCEDURE
Baked Even-sized 225g / 8oz potatoes	1 2 3 4	7 minutes 9 minutes 12 minutes 15 minutes	Prick the potatoes, turn once or twice during cooking. Leave to stand, wrapped in foil, for 5 minutes or until soft.
Boiled New Whole 2540g / 1-1½oz potatoes, unpeeled	350g / 12oz 700g / 1½lb	8 minutes 10 minutes	Combine potatoes and 30ml / 2tbls (for 1½lb, 75ml / 3fl oz) water in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Cover and cook. Stand for 3 minutes. Drain. Toss in butter if liked.
Slices 6mm / ¼in thick	700g / 1½lb 900g / 2lb	10 minutes 11 minutes	Combine potatoes and 50ml / 2fl oz (for 2lb, 75ml / 3fl oz) water in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Cover and cook. Stand for 5 minutes. Drain.
Quarters	700g / 1½lb 900g / 2lb	9 minutes 11 minutes	As for slices. Stand for 5 minutes. Drain.
Diced 1cm / ½in cubes	700g / 1½lb 900g / 2lb	9 minutes 11 minutes	As for slices. Stand for 5 minutes. Drain.

Microwave utensils you may have

You don't need a cupboardful of new equipment to use with your microwave cooker. Many utensils you already have are suitable for microwaving.

You will generally find that any ovenproof or flameproof glass, pottery, earthenware or china, with no metal decoration, are perfectly safe in the microwave. However, it is advisable to avoid using the best dinner service or any fine bone china.

If you are not certain whether your dishes are microwave safe, use the test described in the microtip below.

The more regular the shape of your container, the more evenly the food will cook. Well-rounded corners and concave undersides, allowing even food distribution, are very important for efficient microwave cooking. Choose dishes large enough to hold the food and avoid over-filling. Dishes with straight sides at right angles to the base are preferable.

Food can be covered with a lid, absorbent paper or cling film depending on the food. Vent cling film to prevent it exploding.

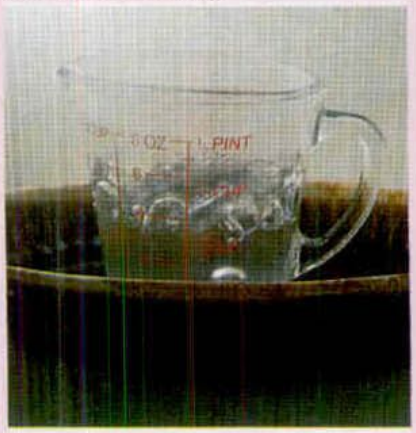
Suitable cookware for a microwave

Ovenproof glass *measuring jugs, pie and baking dishes, plates, casseroles and mixing bowls are all suitable for using in a microwave cooker.*

Flameproof glass or ceramic *casseroles and saucepans can be used with microwave and conventional ovens as well as over direct heat.*

Microtip

To test if a dish is microwave safe, place it in the microwave cooker and put a glass jug containing 150ml / ¼pt water in the dish. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes. If the dish remains cool and the water is hot, the dish is safe to use for microwave cooking.



Dish shapes

Round *shapes give more even cooking results than squares or rectangles. With sharp corners, the microwaves penetrate the dish from both sides, which may overcook the food at the corners.*

Do use

Many conventional dishes can be used in the microwave. When choosing new tableware, choose dishes that are microwave and freezer-safe.

Heatproof glass *These utensils are among the most versatile for use in the microwave. They can be used for serving as well as cooking. Remove detachable handles and make sure they have no metal trim or screws in lids.*

Earthenware *Ovenproof plates, casseroles and dishes that are safe at medium and low temperatures in a conventional oven are equally good for microwave cooking and serving. But beware of using them for mixtures containing a high proportion of sugar, which will become too hot.*

China *Plates and dishes not suitable for conventional cooking can be used for microwaving, but beware of using fine porcelain as it may be damaged.*

Don't use

Dishes which act as a barrier to the microwaves are not suitable.

Metal decorations *Beware of gold or silver rims and trade marks on plates and dishes which may cause sparking.*

Foil *Freezer containers made of foil are generally not recommended for use in a microwave, but most cooker manufacturers will allow a shallow tray up to 2cm / ¾in deep. Check your operating instructions before using.*

Metal baking tins *These reflect the microwaves and cannot be used.*

Foil-lined packages *Cartons such as those used for take-away foods or freezer storage, shield the food from microwave energy. Do not attempt to thaw or re-heat foods in them.*

Melamine cookware *This contains metal and should not be used.*

Pottery *and earthenware serving dishes, mugs and plates can be used to cook and serve. Food stays hotter when it is cooked in the serving dish.*

China *ramekins, soufflé, flan and gratin dishes are both microwave-and conventional cooker-safe, as well as being good containers for serving.*

Paper and rigid plastic *products you use for parties and food storage are useful for those foods which do not become excessively hot.*

Ring *shapes are excellent for foods which cannot be stirred during microwaving. The microwaves penetrate the food from the centre as well as the sides and the top and bottom, giving faster and more even cooking.*

Cook's notes

Cut down on washing up by using serving plates and dishes for cooking, or mix and cook in the same bowl. Many of the conventional microwave-safe dishes are also suitable for the freezer so you can mix, cook, freeze, thaw and serve in one container, if you wish!

Any of your flameproof glass saucepans can be used in the microwave cooker and then transferred to a conventional oven to finish off the cooking, to brown small cuts of meat, for example.

It is quite useful to cook food in individual pottery or earthenware dishes, which can be cooked — in a circle — in the microwave and then served straight away at the table. Shells also make attractive containers, which are microwave safe and presentable at the table.

Sausagemeat bake

18 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

350g / 12oz sausagemeat
1 green pepper, chopped
1 onion, chopped
8 eggs
150ml / ¼pt milk
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
pepper
75g / 3oz Cheddar cheese, grated

SERVES 4

1 Put the sausagemeat in a large bowl and stir in the pepper and onion.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-6 minutes, or until the meat is no longer pink, stirring well after half the cooking time.
3 Break up the sausagemeat with a fork and pour off any excess fat. Spread in a 20 x 20cm / 8 x 8in baking dish. Set aside.
4 Beat together the eggs, milk, salt and pepper in a 2.3L / 4pt bowl. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 5-9 minutes, until eggs are set but moist, stirring every 2 minutes.
5 Stir in the cheese and pour over the sausagemeat. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.
6 Place on an inverted saucer in the microwave cooker and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 10-12 minutes or until the centre is set but slightly moist on top, rotating ¼ turn every 3 minutes. Leave to stand, covered, for 5 minutes.

Quick egg supper

5 mins

Standing time: 2-3 mins

1 egg
2.5ml / ½tsp plain flour
30ml / 2tbls milk
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, grated
25g / 1oz cooked ham, chopped
salt
1.5ml / ¼tsp chilli powder
½ tomato, sliced

SERVES 1

1 Beat the egg and add the flour, milk, cheese, ham and seasonings, blending well. Pour into a greased individual shallow dish and place in the microwave cooker.
2 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 4 minutes. Arrange the tomato slices on top and microwave for a further 1-2 minutes or until almost set. Leave to stand for 2-3 minutes to finish cooking. Serve hot with a salad, if liked.

Quick egg supper for two

Double all the ingredients. Prepare according to the instructions given above but use two individual dishes. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for a total of 9-13 minutes. Leave to stand for 2-3 minutes.

Celebration dinner

Using a microwave makes it easier to prepare and cook a celebration dinner for eight people. Last minute preparations can be carried out while the microwaved joint is left to stand.

This dinner party features a dramatic Crown Roast of Pork and a truly delicious Orange Mousse Surprise. Remember to order the meat in advance. Ask for 2 loins of pork, each with 8 or 9 bones and ask your butcher to prepare them for a crown roast.

Although the meal can be cooked in less time with a microwave than in a conventional oven, it is nevertheless easier to do some of the preparation the day before when planning a party for 8 people.

The Spiced Apple Relish takes only a few minutes to make but it is one of the things that can easily be made ahead to give you more time on the day. The biscuit base and orange mousse can be made the day before. Decorate the mousse before starting to cook the pork.

If your microwave cooker does not have variable power, cook the joint at 100% (High) for 10 minutes per 450 / 1lb and adjust the countdown table accordingly.

Whichever temperature you cook the joint at, leave it to stand for the 10 minutes specified in the recipe, then garnish with peaches and watercress. The joint will hold the heat for an additional 10-20 minutes.

Serve the Relish Tray with pre-dinner drinks before the guests sit down at the table.

MENU
Relish Tray
Assorted raw vegetables and pickles
Spiced Apple Relish
A sweet and savoury accompaniment to roast pork
Crown Roast of Pork
Filled with fruity meaty stuffing
Peas and Artichokes
Classic vegetable combination from Italy
Orange Mousse Surprise
An orange centre inside a cream shell
SERVES 8

Countdown

The day before
Prepare and refrigerate the Spiced Apple Relish and Spiced Peaches. Microwave, make and chill the Orange Mousse Surprise.

Early on the day
Assemble the ingredients for the crown roast stuffing. Microwave and refrigerate stuffing. Cut up raw vegetables for relish tray, place in a bowl of iced water and chill. Calculate the cooking time for the crown roast so you will know when to begin cooking it. Decorate the Orange Mousse Surprise.

About 20 minutes before starting to cook the joint
Remove the stuffing for the crown roast from the refrigerator.

About 1¼-1½ hours before serving time
Microwave the pork (time of starting depends on weight and temperature to be microwaved at). While pork is cooking, drain relish vegetables. Arrange in an attractive pattern on a tray with cherries, gherkins and olives. Cover and refrigerate.

1 hour before serving
Remove Spiced Apple Relish from refrigerator to allow to come to room temperature.

Halfway through cooking time of crown roast
Fill centre of crown roast with stuffing and cover with cling film. Microwave until internal temperature of joint reaches 75°C / 167°F.

10-15 minutes before serving
Remove joint from microwave and leave to stand, loosely covered with foil, for 10 minutes. Transfer to a serving plate, using a fish slice to support stuffing, and decorate the bone ends with paper frills. Cover loosely with foil. Garnish with peaches and watercress just before serving. Microwave the peas and artichokes.

Pull *a skewer carefully across the chocolate circles on the Orange Mousse Surprise from the centre to the edge at intervals, to give a spider's web effect.*

Topside and silverside of beef cannot be dry roasted in a microwave as they will not tenderize in the short cooking time. They have little marbling of fat to break up the long fibres and need added liquid and slow cooking to make them tender.

Braising beef

Braise joints in a roasting bag or casserole dish, covered with a lid or with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwaved at 50% (Medium), these joints will be tender and juicy. However, the slower the cooking the more tender the meat will be; microwave at 30% (Low) for longer if you prefer.

The most accurate way to determine when a joint is cooked is to use a microwave thermometer, or a probe if your microwave has one. These register the internal temperature of the meat while it is in the microwave cooker.

A microwave thermometer can be left inside the meat in a roasting bag or casserole as long as there is room. If using a probe, make a slit in a roasting bag or cling film covering and insert the probe through the slit; it is not possible to use a probe in a dish with a lid.

Alternatively, if you do not have a microwave thermometer or probe, you can use a conventional meat thermometer. The meat must be removed from the microwave cooker first though, as microwaves are affected by the mercury in a conventional thermometer.

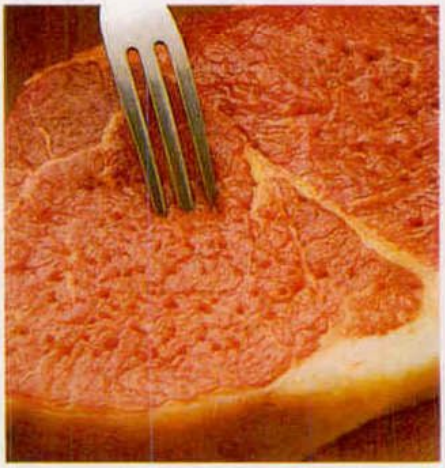
Standing time

The standing time specified in the following recipes is essential. It completes the cooking and tenderizing, allows flavours to blend and gives the juices time to settle, which makes carving easier.

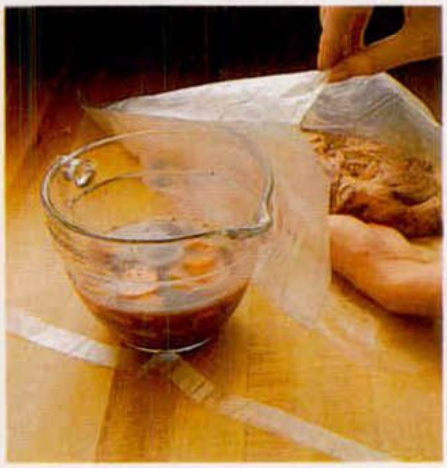
Cook's notes

Buy firm, fine-grained beef and avoid meat with a course-grained texture. Store the meat, covered, in the coolest part of the refrigerator and cook it as soon as possible after buying it.

How to braise beef joints in a microwave



Pierce *the meat deeply all over on both sides with a long-pronged fork to help ensure even cooking throughout. For extra tenderness and flavour, marinate the joint for several hours or overnight in a dish or roasting bag before microwaving.*



Place *the meat and liquid in a roasting bag or casserole. Tie the roasting bag loosely with a strip of plastic cut from the bag; cover dishes with a lid or cling film rolled back at one edge. Place the roasting bag in a baking dish.*

Relish tray

12 radish roses (see below)
3 carrots, cut into 5cm / 2in crinkle-cut or plain strips (see below)
3 celery sticks, cut into 5cm / 2in strips
½ cauliflower, divided into florets
12 bottled cherries in syrup
12 gherkins, quartered
12 stuffed green olives

SERVES 8

1 Arrange the prepared vegetables and the cherries, gherkins and olives in groups on a large round platter. Alternate the colours to give an attractive arrangement.

To prepare radish roses: choose very fresh, even-sized, unblemished radishes and slice off the stalk. Using a sharp knife, make petal-shaped slits round the radish. Put into a bowl of iced water and leave in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes to open out.
To prepare crinkle-cut carrots: cut into slices using a crinkle cutter, then cut into fingers.

VARIATION
Substitute sliced red or green peppers, spring onions or baby mushrooms.

Spiced apple relish

17 mins

Standing time: none

700g / 1½lb red apples, cored and diced
1 onion, finely chopped
50g / 2oz sugar
50g / 2oz raisins
65ml / 2½fl oz water
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground cloves
salt
few drops of red food colouring (optional)

SERVES 8

1 Combine all the ingredients in a large bowl and cover with cling film, rolled back at one edge.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 17 minutes, or until apples are soft, stirring after 8 minutes.
3 Mash gently, then leave to cool.

Peas and artichokes

13 mins

Standing time: none

40g / 1½oz butter
1 onion, chopped
700g / 1½lb frozen peas
salt and pepper
2 x 425g / 15oz cans artichoke hearts, drained and halved

SERVES 8

1 Place the butter and onion in a serving dish and cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.
2 Add peas, cover and microwave 5 minutes. Season, add artichokes, cover and microwave 5-6 minutes.

Creams and custards

Use your microwave to make smooth, silky creams or custards for the family. Then with the addition of more sophisticated flavourings you can transform them into elegant party desserts.

On a conventional cooker, cream desserts can turn lumpy, curdle or stick to the bottom of the saucepan. Cooking them in a microwave eliminates these problems; they don't need to be stirred continuously and will not stick to the dish.

To make a successful custard in the microwave you need slightly less liquid than you would normally use because there is less evaporation. Make sure the cornflour is blended thoroughly with the cold liquid before heating and, if eggs are added, blend them in carefully before cooking.

Vanilla custard cream

8 mins

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz caster sugar
30ml / 2tbls cornflour
15ml / 1tbls plain flour
500ml / 18fl oz milk
3-4 egg yolks
25g / 1oz butter
2.5ml / ½tsp vanilla flavouring

SERVES 6-8

1 Blend the caster sugar, cornflour, plain flour and milk together in a 1.4-1.7L / 2½-3pt bowl mixing well with a whisk.

2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 7-7½ minutes until thick, stirring vigorously with a hand whisk every 2 minutes.

3 Lightly beat the yolks in a separate bowl and mix in 90ml / 6tbls of the hot custard. Blend thoroughly, then stir the yolk mixture into the remaining custard.

4 Microwave for a further 1-2 minutes or until thick.

5 Beat in the butter and vanilla flavouring, then cover with cling film or greaseproof paper. Leave to cool.

Quick and easy eggs

Fast food need not be junk food. When you need a good meal quickly, rustling up an egg dish can be a gourmet experience. Full of protein, eggs can form a main meal or light snack.

Your microwave will cook most egg dishes just as successfully as a conventional cooker — and you will find that microwaved omelettes and other egg recipes are much creamier.

Just as when they are cooked over direct heat, eggs are particularly sensitive to over-cooking, so for best results err on the side of caution when establishing the cooking time. You can always leave the eggs to stand for a minute or two after microwaving.

You can produce a deliciously light fluffy soufflé omelette easily and quickly in the microwave. The soufflé omelette is an interesting variation on the traditional dish which takes superbly to the microwave. To enjoy it at its best, eat as soon as it comes out of the cooker.

An omelette is best cooked at 50% (Medium); if cooked at 100% (High) the edges may be done before the centre and become leathery by the time the whole omelette is done.

Combined with meat, eggs can make a substantial, filling meal. The Sausagemeat Bake on page 50 can be served as a lunch or supper dish. If wished, the dish can be browned on top by sprinkling over grated cheese and placing under the conventional grill for a few minutes before serving.

Eggs are also useful for those times when you feel a bit peckish and could do with a quick snack.

Pepper Soufflé Omelette

Brandy Alexander

3 mins

Standing time: none

30ml / 2tbls caster sugar
10ml / 2tsp cornflour
275ml / ½pt whipping cream
50g / 2oz plain chocolate
30ml / 2tbls crème de cacao liqueur
15ml / 1tbls brandy

TO DECORATE
15g / ½oz hazelnuts, toasted
dark chocolate, chopped
SERVES 4

Microtip

Toast the hazelnuts in the microwave: spread them out in a dish and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, stirring every minute to prevent burning.

How to microwave Brandy Alexander

Mix *together the caster sugar, cornflour and half the whipping cream in a 1.4L / 2½pt mixing bowl. Break the plain chocolate into small pieces and stir them into the cream mixture with a wooden spoon, making sure everything is thoroughly mixed.*

Microwave *at 50% (Medium) for 3 minutes or until very thick, stirring after 1 minute, then every 30 seconds. Stir in the crème de cacao liqueur, leave to cool, then chill for 1 hour. Whisk together the brandy and remaining cream.*

Fold *the brandy cream into the chilled chocolate mixture carefully until evenly mixed. Spoon the mixture into 4 individual serving dishes. Decorate with chopped hazelnuts and pieces of dark bitter chocolate and chill in the refrigerator for 1-2 hours.*

Crème au chocolat

3 mins

Standing time: none

225ml / 8fl oz single cream
45ml / 3tbls caster sugar
150g / 5oz plain chocolate
3 egg yolks
5ml / 1tsp vanilla flavouring

SERVES 6

1 Mix the cream, sugar and chocolate in a 1.4L / 2½pt bowl.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes or until thick and well blended, stirring vigorously every minute. Do not allow to boil.
3 Beat the egg yolks and vanilla until well blended and pale in colour. Gradually beat the chocolate mixture into the yolks and pour into 75ml / 3fl oz ramekin dishes or small wine glasses. Chill for at least 2 hours.

Crème au Chocolat

Pork chops

Pork chops are a versatile cut of meat which combine well with all sorts of other textures and flavours. Cooking them in a microwave ensures they cook through without drying out.

Pork chops are available in four types: rib, spare rib, loin and chump. Rib and spare rib chops have a long bone down one side of the meat; loin chops are larger and have a bone down the centre, and chump chops are boneless. Any type can be used for the recipes here.

Don't trim all the fat from the meat until after cooking; it will help to keep the pork tender and juicy. Standing time is particularly necessary for pork. It allows it to cook through, without drying out. Alternatively a stuffing or bread crumb coating will also help to keep the meat moist.

Saucy pork chops

16 mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

4 pork chops, 1cm / ½in thick
295g / 10.4oz can condensed mushroom soup

SERVES 4

Calculate the cooking time, allowing 16 minutes per 450g / 1lb at 50% (Medium); use chops cut to a width of 1cm / ½in to ensure accurate timing.

Leave a small amount of fat at the edges to prevent drying out.

1 Arrange the chops in a shallow dish with the meaty portions to the outside. Spread over the soup.

2 Cover with cling film. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for the calculated time, turning once. Let stand for 5-10 minutes. Serve with vegetables of your choice.

Microtips

If you prefer chops without fat, it is best to cook them in a liquid such as the soup used here, to seal in the juices. A coating of bread crumbs also retains moisture well.

Sweet and sour beans

14 mins

Standing time: none

3 bacon rashers, chopped
1 small onion, sliced and separated into rings
30ml / 2tbls dark soft brown sugar
salt
1.5ml / ¼tsp mustard powder
30ml / 2tbls wine vinegar
450g / 1lb fresh green beans, trimmed and cut into 4-5cm / 1½-2in lengths
60ml / 4tbls water

SERVES 8

1 Place the bacon and onion in a small bowl. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, until the bacon is cooked and the onion is tender. Mix in the sugar, salt, mustard and vinegar.
2 Place the beans in a 2.3L / 4pt casserole with the water and cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 10-12 minutes, stirring after half the time. Drain.
3 Add the bacon mixture, mixing in well, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes until heated through.

Sweet and Sour Beans

VARIATION
Substitute 450g / 1lb frozen cut green beans for the fresh beans. Microwave at 100% (High) for 13-14 minutes in Step 2, stirring twice during cooking.

Herby green beans

13 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

225g / 8oz frozen green beans cut into 4-5cm / 1½-2in lengths
1 small red or green pepper, chopped
1 onion, chopped
15ml / 1tbls olive oil
2 tomatoes, skinned and chopped
1.5ml / ¼tsp sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp crushed dried basil
large pinch of crushed dried rosemary
salt and pepper

SERVES 4

1 Combine beans and 30ml / 2tbls water in a casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 9 minutes, stirring once. Stand, covered, for 3 minutes. Drain.
2 Combine the pepper, onion and oil; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes; stir once.
3 Add remaining ingredients to the beans. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes.

Herby Green Beans

Green bean medley

15 mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb fresh green beans, cut into 2.5cm / 1in pieces
225g / 8oz mushrooms, sliced
1 red onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
pepper
75ml / 3fl oz water
15ml / 1tbls cider vinegar

SERVES 4

1 Combine all the ingredients except the vinegar in a 2.8L / 5pt dish. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 15 minutes, stirring twice during cooking. Drain well. Stir in the vinegar.

Stuffed pork chops

27 mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

4 pork chops, about 2.5cm / 1in thick
30ml / 2tbls dried breadcrumbs

MUSHROOM STUFFING
50g / 2oz mushrooms, chopped
½ onion, finely chopped
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
40g / 1½oz parsley, thyme and lemon stuffing mix
120ml / 8tbls cold water

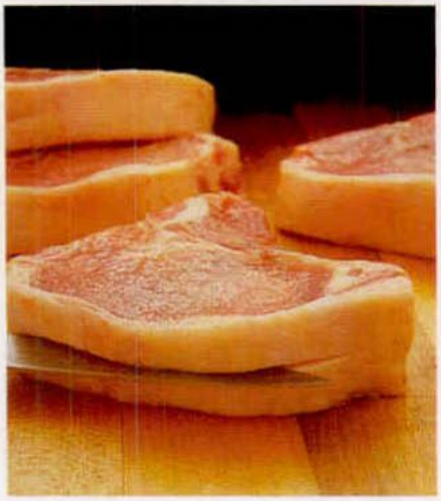
SERVES 4

1 Make pockets in the chops following the step-by-step instructions (right). Set aside while preparing the mushroom stuffing.
2 To make the stuffing, combine the mushrooms, onion and butter in a measuring jug. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes until the onions are just tender, then remove from the cooker.
3 Add the stuffing mix and cold water and stir well.
4 To fill each pocket of the chops, spoon in the stuffing, then press the edges together and secure with wooden cocktail sticks.
5 Press the chops in the dried breadcrumbs until coated, then arrange in a 20 x 30cm / 8 x 12in shallow dish with the thickest parts to the outside.
6 Cover the dish with greaseproof paper, then microwave at 50% (Medium) for 15 minutes.
7 Turn and rearrange the chops so they cook evenly and continue to cook for a further 10-15 minutes. Let stand for 5-10 minutes. Serve with tomato wedges and parsley, accompanied with beetroot in white sauce and a wholewheat pasta, if liked.

Microtips

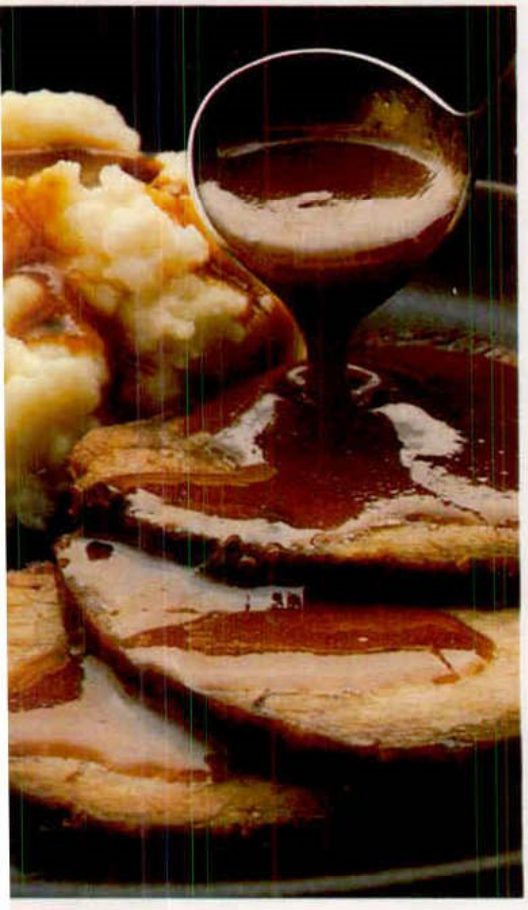
Read the stuffing mix instructions and, if hot water is called for, measure out the water in a cup, place in the cooker and heat the water for about 45 seconds before adding to the other ingredients.

How to stuff pork chops



Slit *horizontally through the pork chops up to the bone with a sharp knife, leaving a 2.5cm / 1in border at the sides, to make pockets.*

Spoon *the stuffing into the pockets. Insert a wooden cocktail stick diagonally across the open end to hold the stuffing inside the cavity.*



Swedish pot roast

66½ mins

Standing time: 10 mins

To microwave at 30% (Low), increase the cooking time to 40-50 minutes per 450g / 1lb.

1.1-1.6kg / 2½-3½lb silverside of beef, trimmed of excess fat
2 onions, sliced
30ml/2tbls cider vinegar
30ml/2tbls golden syrup
2 bay leaves
salt and pepper
2.5ml / ½tsp ground allspice
75ml / 3fl oz water
25g / 1oz plain flour
150ml / ¼pt whipping cream

SERVES 6-8

1 Calculate meat cooking time at 25-30 minutes per 450g / 1lb. Prick the meat all over.
2 Place meat with the remaining ingredients, except the water, flour and cream, in a 2.5-2.8L / 4½-5pt casserole. Cover.
3 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for the calculated time, turning the joint over halfway through.
4 Remove the meat from the casserole, cover loosely with foil and leave to stand for 10 minutes. Skim fat from the meat juices.
5 Blend the water and flour together and stir into the meat juices. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes; stir twice.
6 Stir in the cream and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 1-2 minutes.
7 Serve the meat with gravy.

Barbecued beef

55 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

To microwave at 30% (Low), increase the cooking time to 35-40 minutes per 450g / 1lb.

1.1-1.6kg / 2½-3½lb silverside of beef, trimmed of excess fat
425ml / ¾pt barbecue sauce

SERVES 6-8

Above: Swedish Pot Roast
Below: Barbecued Beef

1 Calculate meat cooking time at 25-30 minutes per 450g / 1lb. Prick the meat all over.
2 Place in a roasting bag and add the sauce. Close the bag with a strip of plastic or an elastic band and leave to marinate at room temperature for 3-4 hours or overnight in the refrigerator.
3 Place the bag in a shallow dish and microwave at 50% (Medium) for the calculated time, or until the meat is tender. Turn the meat over halfway through the time.
4 Leave to stand in the bag for 10 minutes before serving.
5 Slice thinly and serve with cooking juices and mashed potatoes.

Braised topside

70 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

To microwave at 30% (Low), increase the cooking time to 60 minutes and 60-70 minutes.

1.4-1.8kg / 3-4lb topside of beef, trimmed of excess fat
1 beef stock cube
125ml / 4fl oz hot water
15ml / 1tbls Worcestershire sauce
2 large celery stalks, sliced
1 onion, cut into 8 wedges

SERVES 6-8

1 Prick meat thoroughly on both sides and place in a roasting bag.
2 Mix the stock cube with the hot water and Worcestershire sauce and add to the bag. Close the bag loosely with a strip of plastic or an elastic band, leaving space for steam to escape. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 35 minutes.
3 Turn the meat over, add the vegetables and re-close the bag. Microwave for 35-45 minutes. Leave to stand in the bag for 10 minutes before serving.
4 Slice the meat thinly and serve with the cooking juices.

Microtip

Remove the joint from the cooker when the microwave thermometer reads 65°C / 150°F.

Browning

You need not feel worried because food does not brown in microwave cookers as there are many browning agents and utensils available.

One of the few facts that almost everyone knows about microwave cookers is that, in general, they do not brown food. Some people are concerned by this initially, but once they become familiar with microwaving, many cooks feel that browning is not always important.

Many foods do not actually need the added colour given by the heat of an electric or gas cooker. In fact, some — like vegetables — are actually better without dry, crisped surfaces and browned edges.

In a microwave, moisture does not evaporate from the surface of the food, so it is prevented from acquiring the hard, dark surface of conventionally cooked meats and other fatty items.

For those foods which do not tend to brown, however, there are several browning agents available, as well as special browning utensils. A guide to some of these is given on the following pages.

A browning dish browns meat such as sausages beautifully.

RAY DUNS

Microtip

When using a browning dish, preheat in the microwave cooker at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. The dish gets very hot during the cooking time so take care to use oven gloves to remove the dish and place on a heat resistant surface to prevent damage.

Transfer the pizza to a board or plate for cutting and serving as knife cuts will ruin the surface of a browner. Follow the manufacturer's directions for cleaning.

Pizza cookware

A pizza browner *is made of pyroceramic and should be only used in the microwave cooker.*

A microwave roasting rack *allows the steam to escape from the dough, ensuring a drier crust.*

How to microwave a frozen pizza

Remove *pizza from package. Brush ice crystals from bottom of pizza. Preheat pizza browner as directed, above.*

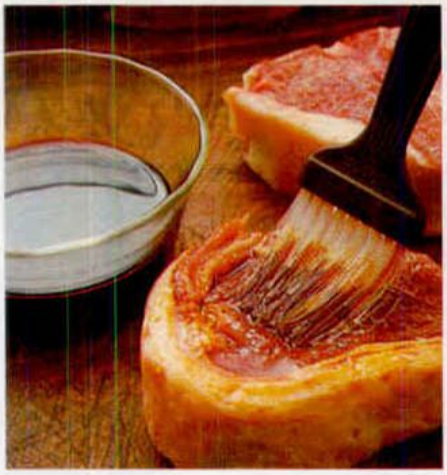
Place *pizza on preheated browner, or plate if using. Microwave at 100% (High) as directed in chart, below, until heated through.*

Lift *one edge to check bottom is cooked. Reheat the browner at 100% (High) for 4 minutes before heating another pizza.*

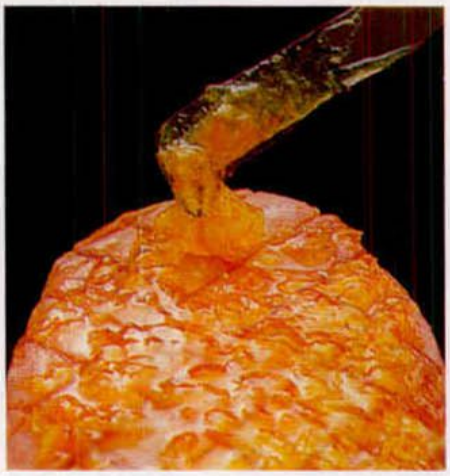
Microwave times for frozen pizzas

ITEM	WEIGHT	MICROWAVE TIME AT 100% (HIGH)	
		ON BROWNER	ON RACK/PLATE
Mini pizza Cook 4 at a time 9-10cm / 3½-4cm	50g / 2oz each	5-6 mins	4-5 mins
Pizza rounds 10-12.5cm / 4-5in 18cm / 7in 20-23cm / 8-9in 28-30cm / 11-12in 28-30cm / 11-12in	75-100g / 3-4oz 175g / 6oz 200-250g / 7-9oz 300-350g / 11-12oz 425g / 15oz	3-4 mins 4-5 mins 5-7 mins 7-9 mins 8-10 mins	2½-3 mins 3-4 mins 4-6 mins 6-8 mins 7-9 mins
French bread pizza Cook 1 at a time Cook 2 at a time	150g / 5oz 175g / 6oz 150g / 5oz 175g / 6oz	4-5 mins 5-7 mins 6-7 mins 7-9 mins	3-4 mins 4-5 mins 5-6 mins 6-8 mins

How to use browning agents



Brush *on liquid browning agents before microwaving. Gravy browning will colour the food without adding very much extra flavour.*



Glaze *ham or poultry with honey, preserves or glazes for both colour and flavour (see chart below). Spread evenly with a knife.*

Roll *chicken pieces in crushed nuts and coconut, breadcrumbs or crushed crisps for a better appearance. Coat before or during cooking.*

Browning agent and coating chart

AGENT	FOODS	COMMENTS
Soy or Teriyaki sauce	Hamburgers, beef, lamb, pork, poultry	Brush on meat; rub into poultry.
Barbecue sauce	Hamburgers, beef, lamb, pork, poultry	Brush on or pour over.
Melted butter and paprika	Poultry	Brush on butter; sprinkle with paprika.
Brown and Fruity sauces and melted butter	Hamburgers, beef, lamb, pork, poultry	Brush on meat; rub into poultry.
Worcestershire or Steak sauce and water	Hamburgers, beef, lamb, pork	Brush on.
Onion soup or gravy mix, bouillon granules	Hamburgers, beef, lamb	Sprinkle on before microwaving.
Taco seasoning mix	Hamburgers, savoury quick breads	Sprinkle on before microwaving.
Breadcrumbs, breadcrumbs and Parmesan cheese, crushed corn chips or potato chips	Casseroles	Sprinkle on after final stirring.
Crushed dried onion rings, or crumbled bacon and grated cheese	Savoury quick breads, casseroles	Sprinkle on before microwaving or after final stirring.
Honey, preserves or glazes	Ham, poultry	Glaze before microwaving or after half the cooking time.

Honey-glazed chops

6 mins

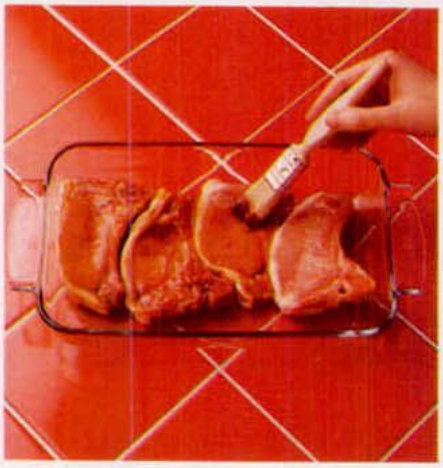
Standing time: 3-5 mins

4 lean pork chops, 1cm / ½in thick
45ml / 3tbls barbecue sauce
5ml / 1tsp dark soy sauce
15ml / 1tbls clear honey

SERVES 4

1 Trim the fat from the chops and place them in a shallow dish.
2 In a small bowl, mix together the sauces and honey. Brush the sauce over the chops and leave to marinate as directed (right).
3 Arrange chops on a roasting rack. Microwave at 100% (High) for 6-8 minutes, turning as directed (right); stand for 3-5 minutes.

How to microwave Honey-glazed chops



Brush *the sauce over the chops to cover and leave to marinate for 20 minutes. This improves the flavour and colour. Brush with the sauce again before microwaving.*

Turn *the roasting rack 180° three times during the cooking. The chops should be turned over after half the cooking time. Leave to stand for 3-5 minutes.*

Quick cheese dishes

Toasted or melted cheese — the easiest thing in the world for a snack. Using a microwave cooker, substantial cheese dishes can be just as quick to make as conventional cheese on toast.

Cheese is the good anytime fast food — nutritious and filling. The warming tang of toasted cheese is a pleasure that has been appreciated for centuries. In less than 10 minutes, the microwave can turn it into a simple main course when combined with macaroni, or into a lunch or supper-time snack as a grilled cheese sandwich. If you are only making one or two it isn't even necessary to put the sandwiches into the microwave once the browning dish has reached maximum heat.

Cheesy French bread

1 min

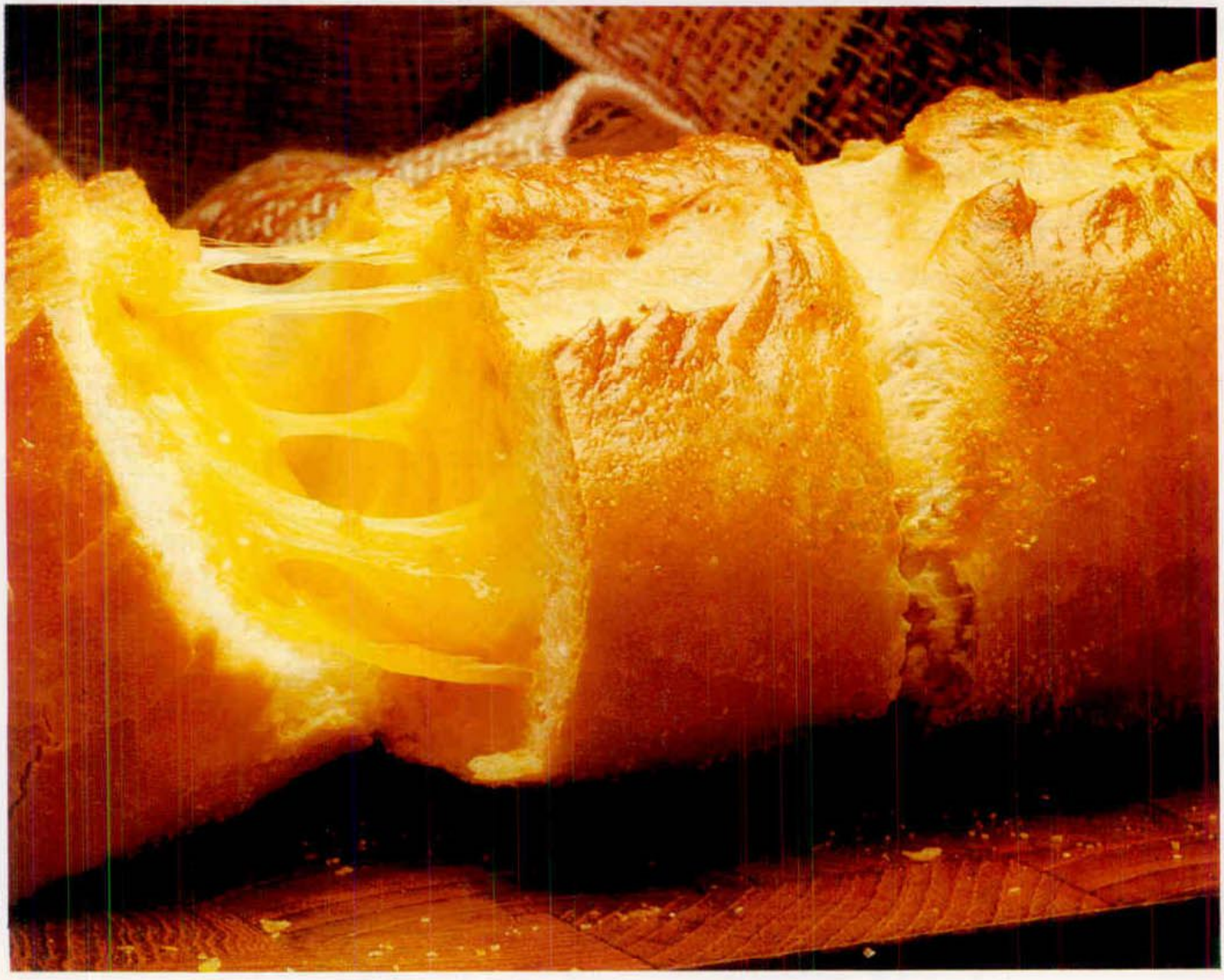
Standing time: none

1 French loaf
3 slices processed Cheddar cheese, cut diagonally into 4 triangles
3 slices Emmental cheese (each weighing about 20g / ¾oz), cut diagonally into 4 triangles.

SERVES 6-8

1 Make 12 diagonal cuts in French loaf at 4cm / 1½in intervals, to within 1cm / ½in of bottom crust.
2 Insert 1 triangle of each type of cheese between the bread slices. Wrap the loaf in absorbent paper.
3 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 1-1½ minutes to melt the cheese.

VARIATION
Omit cheese slices. Melt 50g / 2oz butter in a bowl at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds. Add 25g / 1oz grated Parmesan; brush between slices. Cook as above.



Onion pork chops

27 mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

Pork chops can dry out in the microwave unless care is taken to protect them. Coating with breadcrumbs helps to seal in the juices. The onions in this recipe also provide moisture for the meat.

4 pork chops, 2.5cm / 1in thick
60-90ml /4-6tbls fresh or dry breadcrumbs
salt and pepper
15ml / 1tbls vegetable oil
175g / 6oz onions, thinly sliced

SERVES 4

How to microwave Onion pork chops

Season *the crumbs and coat the pork chops. Preheat a browning dish at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Add the oil then place the chops in the dish.*

Microwave *for 2 minutes, turning after half the cooking time. Place onion rings on each chop and cover with lid or cling film rolled back at one edge.*

Reduce *power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 20-30 minutes, turning once and replacing the onions on top. Let stand for 5-10 minutes.*

Microwave times for pork chops

TYPE OF PORK CHOP	QUANTITY	WEIGHT PER CHOP	MICROWAVE COOKING TIME AT 100% (HIGH)	PROCEDURE
Loin 1cm / ½in thick	2	100-175g / 4-6oz	4-5 mins	Brush chops with a browning aid such as barbecue sauce, soy sauce and butter, or barbecue sauce and soy sauce mixed, if wished. Arrange in a dish with thin parts towards the centre. Turn half way through cooking. Allow to stand according to total weight, up to:
	4	100-175g / 4-6oz	6-8 mins	
Chump (boneless) and spare rib chops 2cm / ¾in thick	2	225g / 8oz	8-10 mins	
	4	225g / 8oz	11-13 mins	
Rib 2.5cm / 1in thick	2	275-350g / 10-12oz	10-12 mins	350g / 12oz 2-3 mins
	4	275-350g / 10-12oz	16-20 mins	700g / 24oz 3-5 mins 1kg / 2lb 3oz 5-10 mins

Swiss fondue

9 mins

Standing time: none

1 garlic clove
225g / 8oz Cheddar cheese, grated
225g / 8oz Gruyère or Emmental cheese, grated
45ml / 3tbls plain flour
large pinch of grated nutmeg
225ml / 8fl oz dry white wine
cubes of crusty French bread

SERVES 4

1 Rub a 2.3L / 4pt casserole with the cut garlic clove.
2 Shake the cheeses, flour and nutmeg together in a polythene bag until well combined.
3 Pour the wine into a large bowl and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 3-4 minutes; do not boil.
4 Stir in the cheese and flour mixture and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 6-8 minutes. Stir every 2 minutes. Serve hot with the cubes of French bread.

VARIATION
Add a good pinch each of cayenne pepper and mustard powder to the cheese and flour mixture.

Macaroni cheese

25½ mins

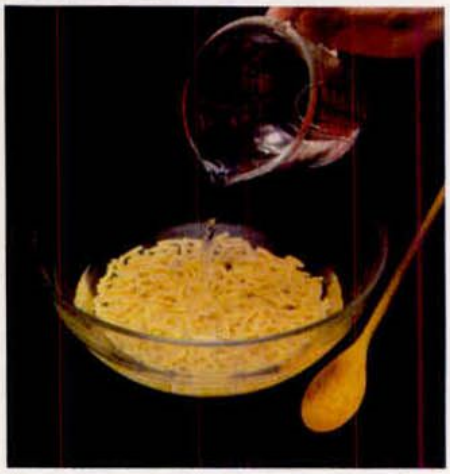
Standing time: none

225g / 8oz short cut macaroni
1.7L / 3pt water
40g / 1½oz butter or margarine
20g / ¾oz flour
salt and pepper
2.5ml / ½tsp mustard powder
350ml / 12fl oz milk
175g / 6oz grated Cheddar cheese

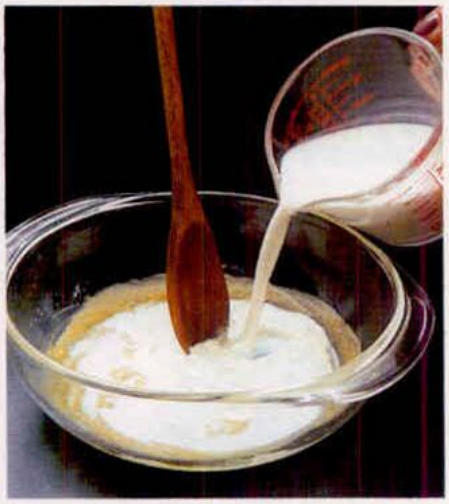
SERVES 6

1 Put the macaroni in a large casserole and add the water. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, then reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 12 minutes. Drain; set aside.
2 Melt the butter in a 2.3L / 4pt casserole at 100% (High) for 40 seconds. Stir in the flour and seasonings.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 30 seconds, then blend in the milk; microwave for 4½ minutes, stirring every minute until thickened.
4 Mix in the grated cheese then stir in the macaroni. Microwave for 3 minutes to heat through, stirring once. Serve immediately.

How to microwave Macaroni cheese



Microwave *macaroni (see recipe) or cook conventionally and microwave sauce while it is cooking.*



Blend *the milk into the flour and butter; microwave, stirring every minute as the sauce cooks and thickens.*

Stir *in the grated cheese, making sure it is all melted. If necessary, microwave for 15–20 seconds.*

Fish fillets in cucumber sauce

10 mins

Standing time: 2 mins

3 lemon slices
3 onion slices
3 whole peppercorns
1 bay leaf
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
65ml / 2½fl oz water
700g / 1½lb frozen cod or haddock fillets, thawed

SAUCE
15ml / 1tbls finely chopped onion
150ml / ¼pt soured cream
100g / 4oz cucumber, seeded and diced
30ml / 2tbls milk
5ml / 1tsp lemon juice
salt and pepper
pinch of nutmeg

SERVES 4

1 In a dish, combine the lemon and onion slices, peppercorns, bay leaf, salt and water. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes. Stir.
2 Arrange the fish fillets in the dish, with the thickest parts to the outside. Re-cover the dish. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4-7 minutes, or until the fish flakes easily with a fork, rotating the dish ½ turn halfway through cooking time. Transfer the fish to a serving plate, cover and set aside.
3 Put the chopped onion in a small bowl, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds, or until tender. Stir in the remaining sauce ingredients. Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 1½-3 minutes, stirring every 30 seconds. Pour over the fish and serve. Decorate with sprigs of parsley, if wished.

Microtips

This dish is also delicious when made with a whole fish, such as trout. You will need a 900g / 2lb fish. Thaw for 10 minutes, then cook for 4 minutes per 450g / 1lb, or until the flesh flakes easily when tested with a fork.

How to thaw fish fillets

Calculate *the thawing time, allowing 3-5 minutes per 450g / 1lb fish at 50% (Medium). Thaw for half the time, then separate and turn the fish.*

Thaw *for the remaining half of the time, until the fish is pliable outside but icy in the centre. Leave to stand for 5 minutes, then pat dry.*

Cod with Courgettes

Cod with courgettes

14 mins

Standing time: 2-3 mins

100g / 4oz courgettes, sliced
1 green pepper, seeded
15ml / 1tbls fresh tarragon
150ml / ¼pt natural yoghurt
salt
700g / 1½lb frozen cod fillets
10ml / 2tsp lemon juice

SERVES 4

1 Put the courgettes in a dish, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes. Place in a blender with the pepper, tarragon, yoghurt and salt and purée coarsely. Pour into a small bowl.
2 Arrange the fish on a roasting rack, sprinkle with lemon juice, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 10-13 minutes; rearrange once during the cooking.
3 Microwave the sauce for 2-3 minutes. Pour over the fish.

Frozen fish fillets

From the freezer to the microwave to the table, frozen fish regains that just-caught texture and flavour. Teamed with a light microwaved sauce, it can be on the table in minutes.

There is more to frozen fish than fish fingers — although these have saved more than one over-stretched mum. Fish fillets — cod, haddock and plaice — are now available from the frozen food cabinet of most supermarkets, and the microwave enables wonderful things to be done with them in a matter of minutes.

The quick but gentle thawing power of the microwave, together with its complementary cooking action, means that the fish has less time to deteriorate.

Accurate timing is essential, however, since, in general, a mere 3-5 minutes is needed to thaw 450g / 1lb of frozen fish fillets. And while overcooked meat is a disappointment, overcooked fish is a disaster. So resist the temptation to 'just make sure' and remember that by the time you get your fish from the microwave to the table, it will have cooked even further.

Frozen fillets can be cooked straight from the freezer; remember there will be extra liquid if you are microwaving it in a sauce and the cooking time will be longer.

Fish Fillets in Cucumber Sauce

Steamed plaice with wine

4 mins

Standing time: 2 mins

4 frozen plaice fillets, about 900g / 2lb total weight, thawed
4 lemon slices
65ml / 2½fl oz white wine
2.5ml / ½tsp grated lemon zest
½ small onion, finely chopped
salt and pepper
5ml / 1tsp finely chopped parsley

SERVES 4

1 Arrange the plaice in a shallow dish. Top with the lemon slices.
2 Combine remaining ingredients. Pour over the fish.
3 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes or until the fish flakes easily, rearranging once. Leave to stand for 2 minutes.

Steamed Plaice with Wine

Smoked haddock fish cakes

14 mins

Standing time: 2-3 mins

275g / 10oz potato
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
15ml / 1tbls chopped parsley
salt and pepper
225g / 8oz packet frozen boil-in-the-bag smoked haddock fillets
1 egg, separated
25g / 1oz cornflakes, finely crushed
1.5ml / ¼tsp paprika

SAUCE
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
salt and pepper
65ml / 2½fl oz soured cream

SERVES 2

1 Wash and prick the potato. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5-7 minutes, turning over halfway through cooking. Allow to cool slightly, then peel. Mash with the butter, parsley and seasoning.
2 Pierce the bag of smoked haddock. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes, allow to cool slightly. Remove the skin, then flake the flesh, discarding bones.
3 Add the fish to the potato mixture. Add the egg white (reserve the yolk for the sauce). Stir well.
4 Divide the mixture into 4 equal portions, shaping each into a 7.5cm / 3in round.
5 In a small shallow dish, mix together the cornflake crumbs and paprika. Coat the haddock with the crumbs, then place on a roasting rack. Cover with absorbent paper. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, rotating the rack twice. Leave to stand for 2-3 minutes.
6 In a small bowl, beat the egg yolk with a fork or wire whisk. Blend in the lemon juice, salt and pepper, then the soured cream. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave the sauce, uncovered, for 2-3 minutes or until thickened, stirring every 30 seconds. Pour over the fish cakes and serve.

Smoked Haddock Fish Cakes

STAR RECIPE

Chocolate-nut fudge

Remember the old-fashioned way of making fudge? That awful sticky pan with burnt-on sugar? The microwave makes perfect, smooth fudge, with little danger of burning the sugar because there is no direct heat.

Making sweets on a conventional hob is always a bit hit and miss. It is difficult to control the heat source sufficiently to boil the sugar without it burning. The microwave does away with all that. You can only burn the sugar if you overcook it quite severely; little can go wrong in the early stages.

The temperature of boiling sugar is much higher than that of boiling water, so be sure to choose a bowl that will withstand it. Ovenproof glass is probably the safest. The bowl must also be large enough to contain the mixture when it boils, as it will rise quite high up the sides.

Use oven gloves to handle the hot bowl when you take it from the cooker, and put it on a heatproof surface or pan-stand. For stirring use a long-handled wooden spoon in case the hot sugar splashes.

Take care to test the sugar mixture early in the cooking, and to remove the bowl from the cooker while you do so. The temperature of the sugar will go on rising a little even after the power is off. If it rises too high the fudge will be hard and crumbly.

Chocolate-nut fudge

15 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

450g / 1lb sugar
75ml / 5tbls cocoa powder
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
250ml / 9fl oz milk
15ml / 1tbls golden syrup
75g / 3oz butter, chopped
2.5ml / ½tsp vanilla flavouring
50g / 2oz chopped nuts (optional)

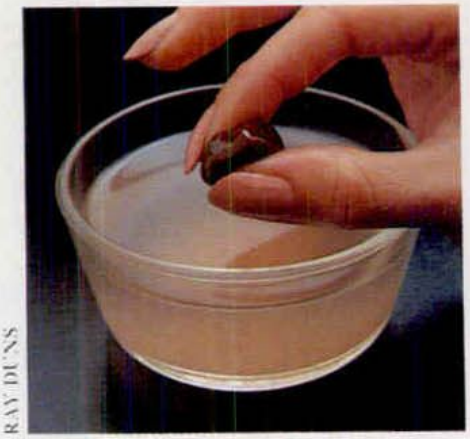
MAKES 700g / 1½lb

VARIATIONS IN COOKING TIMES	
650 watts	5 then 12 minutes
600 watts	7 then 15 minutes
500 watts	7 then 18 minutes

How to microwave Chocolate-nut fudge

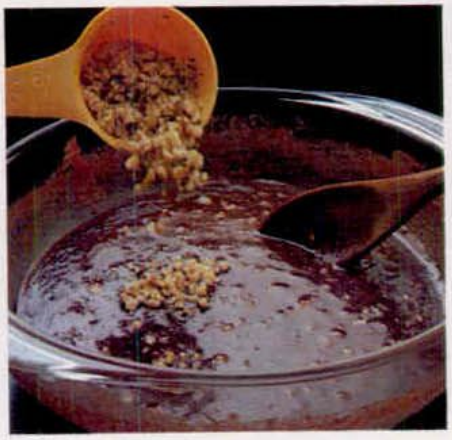
Combine *sugar, cocoa and salt in a 3.4L / 6pt mixing bowl or deep casserole. Stir in milk and syrup thoroughly. Add butter.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, uncovered. Stir well, then microwave at 100% (High), uncovered, for 10 minutes.*

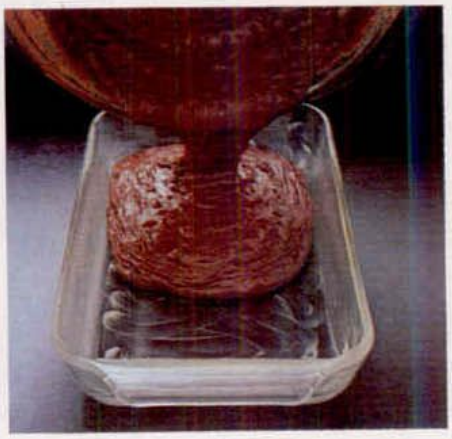


RAY DUNS

Test *by spooning a small amount of mixture into iced water. It should form a soft ball; continue cooking and testing until it does.*



Leave *to stand, without stirring, for 10 minutes. Add vanilla flavouring and nuts it using; beat vigorously until the mixture is thick and holds it shape.*



Pour *quickly into a buttered 23 x 12.5cm / 9 x 5in rectangular baking dish. Leave to set, then cut into squares with a sharp knife.*

Spicy meatballs

15 mins

Standing time: none

700g / 1½lb lamb, minced
60ml / 4tbls finely chopped fresh mint, or 20ml / 1½tbls dried mint
salt and pepper

SAUCE
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
2 onions, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
150ml / ¼pt boiling water
½ chicken stock cube
5ml / 1tsp flour
2.5ml / ½tsp turmeric
5ml / 1tsp ground ginger
large pinch of chilli powder

SERVES 6-8

1 Combine the lamb with the mint and seasonings. Knead together.
2 Shape into 32 meatballs. Place on a shallow dish and microwave at 100% (High) for about 7 minutes. Rearrange 2 or 3 times. Drain.
3 In a bowl, combine the butter, onion and garlic. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes. Stir in a sprinkling of salt, then add remaining sauce ingredients. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes until thick; stir.
4 Stir the meatballs into the sauce. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes to heat through.

Lemony cucumber salad

60ml / 4tbls lemon juice
60ml / 4tbls olive oil
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
1.5ml / ¼tsp sugar
2 cucumbers, peeled and chopped
4 tomatoes, peeled and chopped
25g / 1oz parsley, finely chopped
2 large spring onions, chopped
1-2 garlic cloves, crushed
30ml / 2tbls finely chopped mint or 10ml / 2tsp dried mint

SERVES 6-8

1 In a bowl, blend together the lemon juice, oil, salt and sugar.
2 Add all remaining ingredients. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Five boy curry

34¼ mins

Standing time: none

25g / 1oz butter or margarine
1 large onion, chopped
2 large celery stalks, chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
25g / 1oz plain flour
2.5ml / ½tsp dried thyme
salt and pepper
1.8kg / 4lb chicken pieces
15ml / 1tbls Madras curry powder
1 bay leaf
400g / 14oz can tomatoes
150ml / ¼pt whipping cream

CONDIMENTS
Fresh Fruit Chutney (see recipe)
blanched almonds
toasted coconut
crumbled crisp bacon
hard-boiled egg, chopped

SERVES 6-8

1 In a 3.5L / 6pt mixing bowl or dish, combine the butter, onion, celery and garlic. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes.
2 In a plastic bag, combine the flour, thyme, salt and pepper. Add the chicken and shake to coat.
3 Blend the curry powder into the butter mixture, then add the chicken (plus any flour remaining in the bag), bay leaf and tomatoes with their juice. Cover.
4 Microwave the chicken at 100% (High) for about 30 minutes, until meat is tender, stirring 3-4 times.
5 Arrange the chicken in a serving dish. Keep hot. Stir cream into the sauce; microwave for 15 seconds. Serve separately.

VARIATION
If serving the chicken separately, garnish with 5-6 peeled tomatoes and parsley sprigs.

Almond Honey Cake

RAY DUNS

Indian curry party

An Indian curry such as this demands a number of people to enjoy it: the festive abundance of flavours and colours creates a true party atmosphere

The curious name of the centrepiece of this meal — 'Five Boy Curry' — refers to the number of servants once needed to present the condiments traditionally served with curries in India.

A modern Western dinner party may lack that pomp, but the variety of dishes and the numerous small bowls of condiments which decorate the party table recall something of a maharajah's splendour and style.

The meal is a perfect balance of mild and spicy dishes; the strongly-flavoured curry is offset by a cool salad and a varied selection of condiments.

The menu has been designed so that most of the cooking can be done well in advance, leaving the day of the party free until just before the guests arrive. Although Five Boy Curry can be prepared just before serving, it tastes even better made a day in advance (except for the cream) and the flavours left to develop overnight. This means you have even more time to spend with your guests.

The Spicy Meatballs in their flavourful sauce can be served as a delicious appetizer. To garnish, simply add chopped celery or any other fresh vegetable. Place a cocktail stick in each meatball and allow guests to help themselves. The Five Boy Curry must be served with all its accompaniments, as well as the Lemony Cucumber Salad, Riz Indienne and Fresh Fruit Chutney. The tea can be served at the same time as the Almond Honey Cake to make a refreshing finish to a truly delicious feast.

MENU

Spicy Meatballs
Lamb meatball appetizer in spicy sauce

Lemony Cucumber Salad
Cucumbers and tomatoes in minted lemon juice and olive oil

Five Boy Curry
Chicken curry served with small bowls of condiments

Riz Indienne
Fluffy pilaf with raisins

Fresh Fruit Chutney
Sweet and tangy fruit relish

Almond Honey Cake
Honey-glazed citrus and spice cake

Darjeeling Tea

SERVES 8

Countdown

In advance
Make the Fresh Fruit Chutney and store, covered, in the refrigerator until required.

The day before
Prepare the Lemony Cucumber Salad, cover and refrigerate until required. Make the Spicy Meatballs and the sauce. Store, covered, in separate bowls in the refrigerator. Make the Five Boy Curry, but do not add the cream, then store, covered, in the refrigerator.

Early on the day
Make and glaze the cake. (*Note*: the cake can be made and frozen, unglazed, for up to 2 weeks. To thaw, microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes.) Prepare the Riz Indienne up to the end of Step 1.

1-2 hours before the meal.
Remove the Fresh Fruit Chutney from the refrigerator. Leave to stand and come to room temperature before serving.

45 minutes before the meal
Microwave the meatball sauce at 100% (High) for 2 minutes. Stir in the meatballs, cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave for 3 minutes until hot. Complete cooking the Riz Indienne and leave to stand for 10 minutes. Reheat the Five Boy Curry at 100% (High) for 15-20 minutes, stirring from time to time. Stir in the cream. If necessary, reheat the rice at 100% (High) for 1-3 minutes, before serving.

Between the main course and the dessert
Boil water conventionally to make the Darjeeling Tea. Meanwhile, if the cake is to be served warm, reheat, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 2 minutes.

Almond Honey cake: *Line the cake dish with cling film to ease the turning out of the cake when cooked.*

Green beans with dill

16½ mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb frozen cut green beans
30ml / 2tbls water
1 small onion, chopped
10ml / 2tsp cornflour
125ml / 4fl oz water
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried dill weed pepper
5ml / 1tsp cider vinegar
1 chicken stock cube

SERVES 4

1 Place the beans and 30ml / 2tbls water in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 15 minutes, stirring twice during the cooking time. Drain, cover and set aside.
2 In a small bowl, blend the remaining ingredients, crumbling the stock cube, and microwave at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes, or until clear and thickened. Pour over the beans and toss. Serve immediately.

Garlic runner beans

14½ mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb fresh runner beans, sliced
30ml / 2tbls water
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
1 red pepper, cored, seeded and sliced into strips
1 onion, sliced and separated into rings
50g / 2oz butter
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
100g / 4oz button mushrooms, sliced
2.5ml / ½tsp dried oregano pepper

SERVES 4

1 Pour the water into a 2.3L / 4pt casserole and stir in the salt. Add the beans, red pepper and onion. Mix well, cover, then microwave at 100% (High) for 12-15 minutes, stirring twice. Drain.
2 In a small bowl, microwave the butter and garlic at 100% (High) for 1 minute. Stir in the sliced mushrooms, oregano and pepper; microwave for 1½-2 minutes.
3 Pour the butter and mushroom mixture over the beans and toss thoroughly to coat. Serve with plain-cooked fish or meat.

Green Beans with Dill

Broad beans in lemon sauce

10 mins

Standing time: none

6-8 slices streaky bacon, rinded
450g / 1lb broad beans, podded
125ml / 4fl oz water
25g / 1oz butter
25g / 1oz flour
275ml / ½pt chicken stock
salt and pepper
2 eggs
grated zest of ½ lemon
30ml / 2tbls lemon juice

SERVES 4

1 Place the bacon on a plate, cover with absorbent paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-2½ minutes. Cool, then crumble.
2 Place the beans and water in a 2L / 3½pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for about 5-10 minutes or until tender, stirring twice.
3 Blend the butter, flour, stock, salt and pepper in a large jug. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-2½ minutes, stirring every 30 seconds.
4 Whisk the eggs in a bowl until frothy. Gradually add the lemon zest and juice, then 45ml / 3tbls of the sauce to the eggs. Stir the egg mixture into the sauce.
5 Microwave at 100% (High) for about 1 minute or until hot, stirring every 15 seconds. Do not boil. Drain beans, then stir in the sauce. Sprinkle the bacon on top.

Riz indienne

28 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

1 onion, finely chopped
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
850ml / 1½pt boiling water
450g / 1lb long grain rice
100g / 4oz almonds, blanched and halved
100g / 4oz raisins
2 chicken stock cubes
salt and pepper

SERVES 6-8

1 Microwave the onion and butter at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.
2 Stir in remaining ingredients; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 8 minutes. Reduce power and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 17 minutes; stir 2-3 times.
3 Leave to stand, covered, for 10 minutes; fluff with a fork.

Fresh fruit chutney

20 mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb cooking apples, peeled and chopped
1 mango, peeled and chopped
1 onion, finely chopped
225g / 8oz sugar
100g / 4oz raisins
125ml / 4fl oz cider or malt vinegar
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
2.5ml / ½tsp mustard powder

SERVES 8

1 Combine all the ingredients in a 2.3L / 4pt dish or mixing bowl.
2 Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 20 minutes, stirring 2-3 times during cooking.
3 Cool, cover and refrigerate until required. Store for up to 2 weeks.

Almond honey cake

10 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

175g / 6oz self-raising flour
2.5ml / ½tsp baking powder
175g / 6oz soft margarine
40g / 2½tbls soft brown sugar
75g / 4tbls clear honey
3 eggs
5ml / 1tsp ground cinnamon
5ml / 1tsp ground mixed spice
15ml / 1tbls finely grated orange peel
large pinch of salt
45ml / 3tbls milk

GLAZE
50g / 2½tbls honey
50g / 2oz butter
25g / 1oz flaked almonds

SERVES 8

1 Line a loaf dish measuring 22 x 12cm / 8½ x 4½in and 7.5cm / 3in deep or a dish of similar capacity with a piece of cling film.
2 Combine all the ingredients and beat well together until creamy. Turn into the prepared dish.
3 Stand the dish on an upturned plate; microwave at 100% (High) for 8-9 minutes, turning every 3 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes.

Fresh Fruit Chutney

4 Combine the glaze ingredients in a jug and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes; stir once.
5 Pour two thirds of the glaze over the top of the cake, scatter with almonds. Then pour over the remaining glaze.

Microtips

Cakes cannot be stirred halfway through the cooking time, but standing the dish on an upturned plate in the microwave encourages a more even distribution of the microwaves.

For this cake you need soft, clear honey; if you only have crystallised honey, microwave it at 100% (High) for 1 minute to soften it before using for the glaze.

Browning agents

Many foods do not brown during microwaving and, while some cooks do not mind, others prefer the more traditional appearance. In that case, browning agents can be used to give microwaved foods an appearance similar to conventionally cooked food. Many browning agents will also flavour the food, and so should be selected to complement the food.

Hamburgers look slightly grey at the end of the microwaving time but turn darker during the standing time. Chops and steaks look pinkish grey when cooked. In both cases a browning agent will give a better appearance. Brush the meat with a liquid browning agent or sprinkle with a dry agent (see the chart opposite).

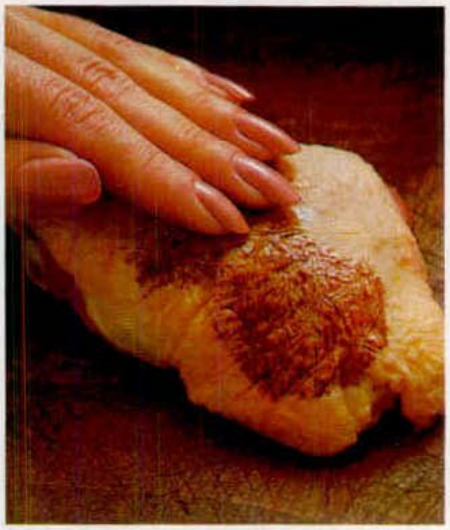
Plain microwaved chicken has a light golden colour when microwaved, due to the fat just below the skin. If a stronger colour is preferred, use a browning agent. A good idea for chicken portions is to brush them with melted butter then sprinkle over some paprika before microwaving.

Some foods do brown, *such as a roast with a good covering of fat, whole chickens or turkey breasts. These meats have a high fat content which comes to the surface quickly and browns. With the exception of bacon, however, the foods will not be crisp, but will be juicy and tender.*

Sweet and savoury browning agents

RAY DUNS

Choose *a browning agent appropriate for the food that is being microwaved (see the chart opposite). Browning agents can be savoury, sweet or unflavoured: choose one to complement the food. Some liquids can be brushed on straight from the bottle, others may need to be diluted with equal parts of water or butter, depending on individual taste. Dry browning agents, such as soup mix or paprika, may be sprinkled on before or during microwaving.*



Dry *the skin of a small chicken, or chicken pieces, thoroughly before applying a browning agent. Then, rub the liquid agent into the skin to the required colour. Strong sauces such as soy sauce should be diluted with water or butter to prevent the sauce flavour dominating the taste of the meat. Dilute according to taste.*

Flavoured creams

Chocolate cream: omit the sugar and butter and add 100g / 4oz plain dark chocolate, broken into small pieces, to the blended flour and milk mixture before microwaving. Stir vigorously every 2 minutes until the mixture is thick.

Banana cream: fold 2 sliced bananas into the custard with the vanilla flavouring. Serve in individual long glasses, and top each serving with a banana slice.

Coffee walnut cream: use half brown sugar and add 10ml / 2tsp instant coffee to the mixture before microwaving. Stir in 25g / 1oz chopped walnuts with the vanilla if preferred. Top each serving with 5ml / 1tsp of whipped cream and a walnut.

Butterscotch cream: substitute light soft brown sugar for the caster sugar. If wished, stir in 25g / 1oz chopped walnuts with the vanilla for extra flavour. Pipe a swirl of whipped cream on top.

Eggnog cream: make the Vanilla Cream with 4 egg yolks. Stir 5ml / 1tsp rum flavouring and 1.5ml / ¼tsp ground nutmeg in with the vanilla flavouring. Spoon into tall stemmed glasses. Serve topped with whipped cream (125ml / 4fl oz is sufficient for 6 glasses) and sprinkle with grated nutmeg.

Strawberry cream: make the Vanilla Cream with 4 egg yolks. When cold, fold in 125ml / 4fl oz whipping cream, whipped. Layer the custard with the strawberries (see below) and a little of their juice in individual sundae dishes or long-stemmed glasses. Top with a slice of strawberry.

For the strawberry layer: microwave 450g / 1lb frozen strawberries in a large mixing bowl at 25% (Low) for 6 minutes, stirring carefully with a spatula every 2 minutes. Halve the strawberries, which will still be firm, reserving 6 slices for decoration. Keep these 6 slices frozen. Return the remaining strawberries to the bowl and sprinkle over 15ml / 1tbls caster sugar and 15ml / 1tbls brandy (optional). Microwave at 25% (Low) for 2½-3 minutes until just thawed, stirring every minute.

Coconut cream: stir about 50g / 2oz unsweetened desiccated coconut into the mixture before microwaving. Add 2.5ml / ½tsp almond flavouring with the vanilla.

From left to right: *Banana Cream, Butterscotch Cream, Chocolate Cream, Strawberry Cream, Coffee Walnut Cream, Eggnog Cream.*

Fancy frostings

Make your microwaved sponge cakes really interesting with a variety of frostings. The quantities given in our recipes will frost the top and sides of one round- or square-shaped cake.

Buttercream frosting

30 secs

Standing time: none

15g / ½oz butter or margarine
15ml / 1tbls cream or milk
pinch of salt
225g / 8oz icing sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp vanilla or rum flavouring

1 Combine the butter, cream and salt in a mixing bowl. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 30-40 seconds or until bubbling.
2 Add the icing sugar and flavouring and beat until the frosting is smooth and of a spreading consistency, adding a few more drops of cream or milk to thin the mixture a little if necessary.

VARIATIONS
Coffee Frosting: Add 1.5ml / ¼tsp instant coffee powder to the butter mixture and mix in well before microwaving.
Maple Frosting: Beat in 10ml / 2tsp maple syrup or flavouring with the sugar.
Peanut Butter Frosting: Add 15ml / 1tbls peanut butter to the mixture before microwaving.
Butternut Frosting: Increase butter to 25g / 1oz and add 25g / 1oz finely chopped nuts before microwaving.

Butterscotch frosting

1½ mins

Standing time: none

25g / 1oz butter or margarine
15ml / 1tbls milk
40g / 1½oz soft dark brown sugar
225g / 8oz icing sugar

1 Combine butter, milk and brown sugar in a bowl. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes, until mixture boils, stirring halfway through. Boil for 30 seconds.
2 Add the icing sugar, and beat until of a spreading consistency.

VARIATION
Browned Butter: Microwave butter at 100% (High) for 1-3 minutes, until brown, then continue as above.

How to make and use Buttercream frosting

Combine *butter, cream and salt in a mixing bowl. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 30-40 seconds until bubbling, to give a good cooked flavour.*

Add *the sugar and flavouring. Beat until smooth and of a spreading consistency. Add more sugar to thicken the mixture, add liquid to thin.*

Make *the frosting stiff enough to hold deep swirls, but soft enough to look moist. Warm frosting may need thinning as it cools.*

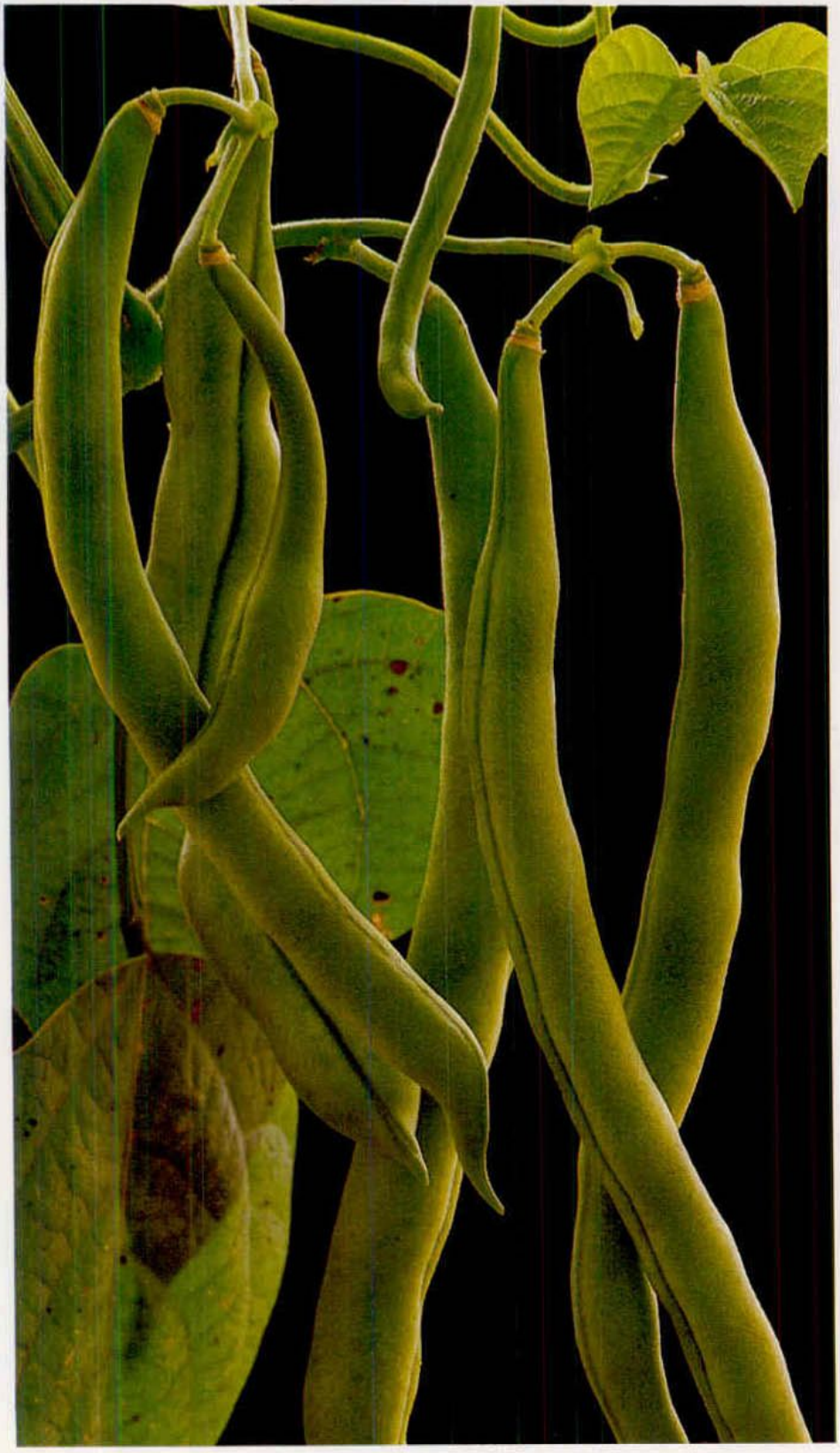
Spread *a thin layer of frosting over the sides of the cake with a palette knife; repeat with a heavier coating using about two thirds of the frosting.*

Frost *the top of the cake in the same way using the remaining frosting. If freezing the cake, freeze before decorating, then frost when thawed.*

Make *swirls, using a palette knife or the back of a teaspoon. Decorate the top of the frosting with a sprinkling of coconut or chopped nuts, if wished.*

Cooking beans

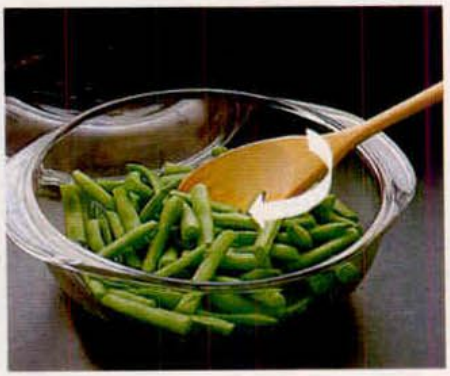
Cooking fresh beans in a microwave retains all their sparkling colour and delicious crispness. Frozen and canned beans microwave just as successfully.



Choose young, firm, tender beans; microwaving cannot improve poor quality vegetables. Though cooking times vary according to the thickness and tenderness of the beans, they should always retain some bite. Beans that have been cut into smaller pieces will take less time; whole beans can be left to stand for 2-3 minutes after cooking. Lemon juice or crushed garlic mixed into softened butter make tasty toppings.

How to microwave fresh green beans

Combine *225g / 8oz prepared beans with 30ml / 2tbls water in 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Cover.*

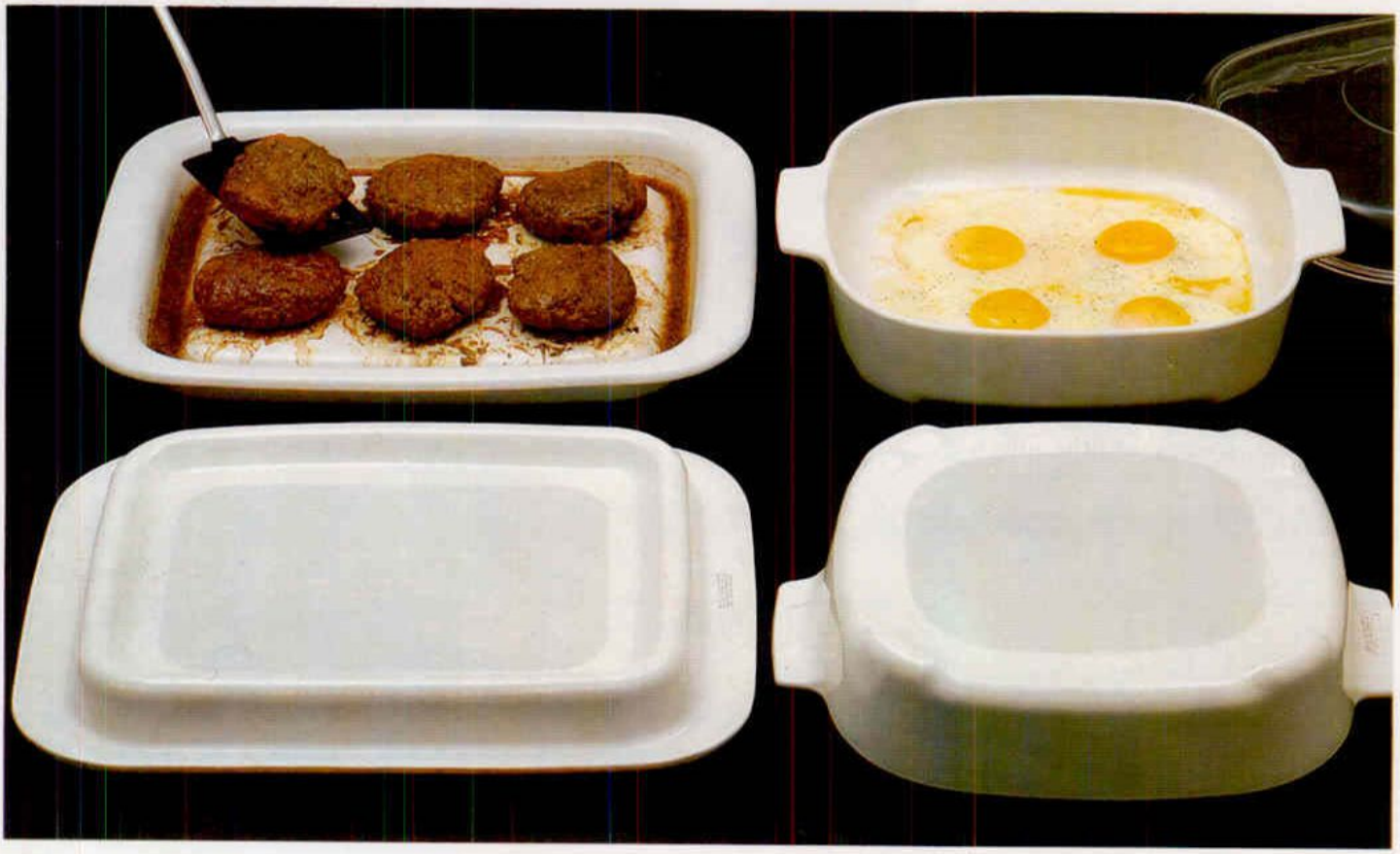


Microwave *at 100% (High) until tender, but still crisp, stirring once. See chart for cooking times.*

Browning utensils

The utensils below are designed specifically for microwaving and they will sear and brown foods the way a conventional grill does. They should never be used for conventional cooking.

Browning utensils have a special coating on the base which absorbs microwave energy and reaches a temperature of 240-330°C / 500°-600°F. The sides and handles of the utensils do not get as hot as in a conventional oven. Ridges raise the bottom of the dishes, but hot utensils should not be placed on table tops.



A browning plate *(above left) is a very shallow dish with a well that catches the juices from hamburgers and chops so they do not steam. Do not cover with absorbent paper as it could catch on fire. Lower left: the upside down dish shows the special coating which attracts microwaves.*

A browning dish *is more versatile. It has higher sides and a cover which can be used to prevent splatters. Food can be browned, then sauces added.*

How to use browning utensils

Make sure *that the cooker is spotlessly clean, grease or food spillages will bake on to the cooker when the special coating on the bottom of the browning dish gets very hot.*

Preheat *the dish at 100% (High) according to the manufacturer's instructions. If adding butter, preheat for half or two thirds of the time, then add the butter.*

Microtips

If buying a browning utensil, a browning dish is more versatile than a browning plate. It has higher sides and a lid which means it can be used for a greater variety of foods. Items can be browned first, then continue cooking in the browning dish. Once food is added the dish becomes cooler as the microwaves are attracted to the water molecules in the food. But always use oven gloves to remove items from the microwave as a safety precaution. Do not put the hot browning dish straight on a table or a plastic mat.

Microwave times for beans

TYPE	QUANTITY	COOKING TIME AT 100% (HIGH)	PROCEDURE
FRESH			
Green, whole	225g / 8oz	8-10 minutes	Combine beans and 30ml / 2tbls water in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole; cover. Stir once.
	450g / 1lb	15-18 minutes	
Green, cut into 4-5cm / 1½-2in lengths	225g / 8oz	7-9 minutes	As above.
	450g / 1lb	12-15 minutes	As above.
Baby green, whole	225g / 8oz	7-9 minutes	Place in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole with 30ml / 2tbls water; cover. Stir 3-4 times.
	450g / 1lb	12-15 minutes	As above. Stir 4-5 times during cooking.
Runner, sliced	225g / 8oz	7-9 minutes	As above. Stir 4-5 times during cooking.
	450g / 1lb	12-15 minutes	As above. Stir 4-5 times during cooking.
Runner, cut in diagonal slices	225g / 8oz	7-9 minutes	As for cut green beans above.
	450g / 1lb	12-15 minutes	As above.
Broad, podded	225g / 8oz	5-7 minutes	Place in a 1.1L / 2pt casserole and add 75ml / 5tbls water; cover. Stir once.
	450g / 1lb	5-10 minutes	Place in a 1.1L / 2pt casserole and add 125ml / 4fl oz water; cover. Stir twice during cooking. Test beans after 5 minutes. Drain.
FROZEN			
Green, whole	225g / 8oz	9-10 minutes	Place in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole with 30ml / 2tbls water; cover. Stir once. Stand 3 minutes.
	450g / 1lb	14-15 minutes	As above with 60ml / 4tbls water.
Green, cut into 4-5cm / 1½-2in lengths	225g / 8oz	11-12 minutes	Place in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole with 30ml / 2tbls water; cover. Stir once.
	450g / 1lb	15-16 minutes	As above with 60ml / 4tbls water. Stir twice.
Baby green, whole	225g / 8oz	8-9 minutes	Place in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole with 30ml / 2tbls water; cover. Stir twice during cooking.
	450g / 1lb	13-15 minutes	As above with 60ml / 4tbls water. Stir 3-4 times.
Runner, sliced	225g / 8oz	11 minutes	Place in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole with 30ml / 2tbls water; cover. Stir once during cooking.
	450g / 1lb	18 minutes	Place in a 2.3L / 4pt casserole with 60ml / 4tbls water; cover. Stir twice during cooking.
Broad	225g / 8oz	6-7 minutes	Place in a 1.1L / 2pt casserole with 60ml / 4tbls water; cover. Stir once.
	450g / 1lb	10-11 minutes	Place in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole with 125ml / 4fl oz water; cover. Stir twice.
CANNED			
Green, whole	280g / 10oz	2-3 minutes	Measure 30ml / 2tbls bean liquid into 1.1L / 2pt casserole. Drain remaining liquid.Empty the beans into the casserole; cover.
	2 x 280g / 10oz	4-5 minutes	As above in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Stir once.
Green, cut	280g / 10oz	2-3 minutes	As above.
	2 x 280g / 10oz	4 minutes	As above.
Broad	280g / 10oz	2 minutes	Measure 30ml / 2tbls bean liquid and the beans into 1.1L / 2pt casserole; cover.
	2 x 280g / 10oz	3 minutes	As above in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole.

Left: *Bacon-cheese Stuffed Potatoes;* **right:** *Macaroni Cheese*

Bacon-cheese stuffed potatoes

22 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

4 225g / 8oz potatoes, scrubbed
6 bacon rashers
150ml / ¼pt milk
40g / 1½oz butter or margarine
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
2.5ml / ½tsp dry mustard
large pinch of ground pepper
75g / 3oz grated Cheddar cheese
5ml / 1tsp chopped chives

SERVES 4

1 Prick the potatoes twice. Place 2.5cm / 1in apart in the cooker and microwave at 100% (High) for 7½ minutes.
2 Rearrange the potatoes and turn over and microwave at 100% (High) for 7½ minutes. Wrap in foil and leave to stand for at least 5 minutes to complete cooking.
3 Put the bacon on a plate, cover with absorbent paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 4-4½ minutes until slightly underdone.
4 Cut a slice from each potato and scoop out the centres. Add milk, butter and seasonings to the potato and mash well. Stir in cheese. Crumble the bacon and add two-thirds to the potato mixture. Spoon into the potato shells.
5 Sprinkle with the remaining bacon and chives. Arrange on a plate and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, rotating once.

Muffin rarebit

3 mins

Standing time: none

50ml / 2fl oz beer
Knob of butter or margarine
2.5ml / ½tsp Worcestershire sauce
large pinch of mustard powder
100g / 4oz grated Cheddar cheese
7.5ml / 1½tsp plain flour
1 muffin, split

SERVES 1

1 Mix the beer, butter, Worcestershire sauce and mustard powder together in a 600ml / 1pt casserole.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes or until the mixture boils and the butter melts.
3 Mix the cheese and flour together and gradually stir into the beer mixture.
4 Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and cook for 1-2 minutes or until cheese melts and the mixture is smooth, whisking vigorously after each minute.
5 Meanwhile, toast the muffin. Pour over the cheese mixture and serve at once.

Potato and cheese soufflé

4½ mins

Standing time: none

30ml / 2tbls grated Parmesan cheese
150g / 5oz cooked mashed potato
2 eggs, separated
75ml / 5tbls milk
100g / 4oz Cheddar cheese, grated
salt and cayenne pepper

SERVES 4

1 Butter 4 ramekin dishes and coat the inside with grated Parmesan cheese.
2 Beat the potato, egg yolks and milk together until smooth. Stir in the Cheddar cheese and seasoning. Whisk the egg white and fold into the cheese mixture.
3 Spoon into the ramekins in equal quantities. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4½ minutes. Serve immediately.

VARIATION
For 2 people, use 15ml / 1tbls grated Parmesan cheese, 65g / 2½oz cooked mashed potato, 1 egg, 45ml / 3tbls milk, 50g / 2oz grated Cheddar cheese and seasoning. Butter 2 ramekin dishes and microwave for only 2½ minutes at 100% (High).

Cook's notes

Use 40g / 1½oz instant mashed potato granules mixed with 150ml / ¼pt water to make up 150g / 5oz cooked mashed potato.

Apples

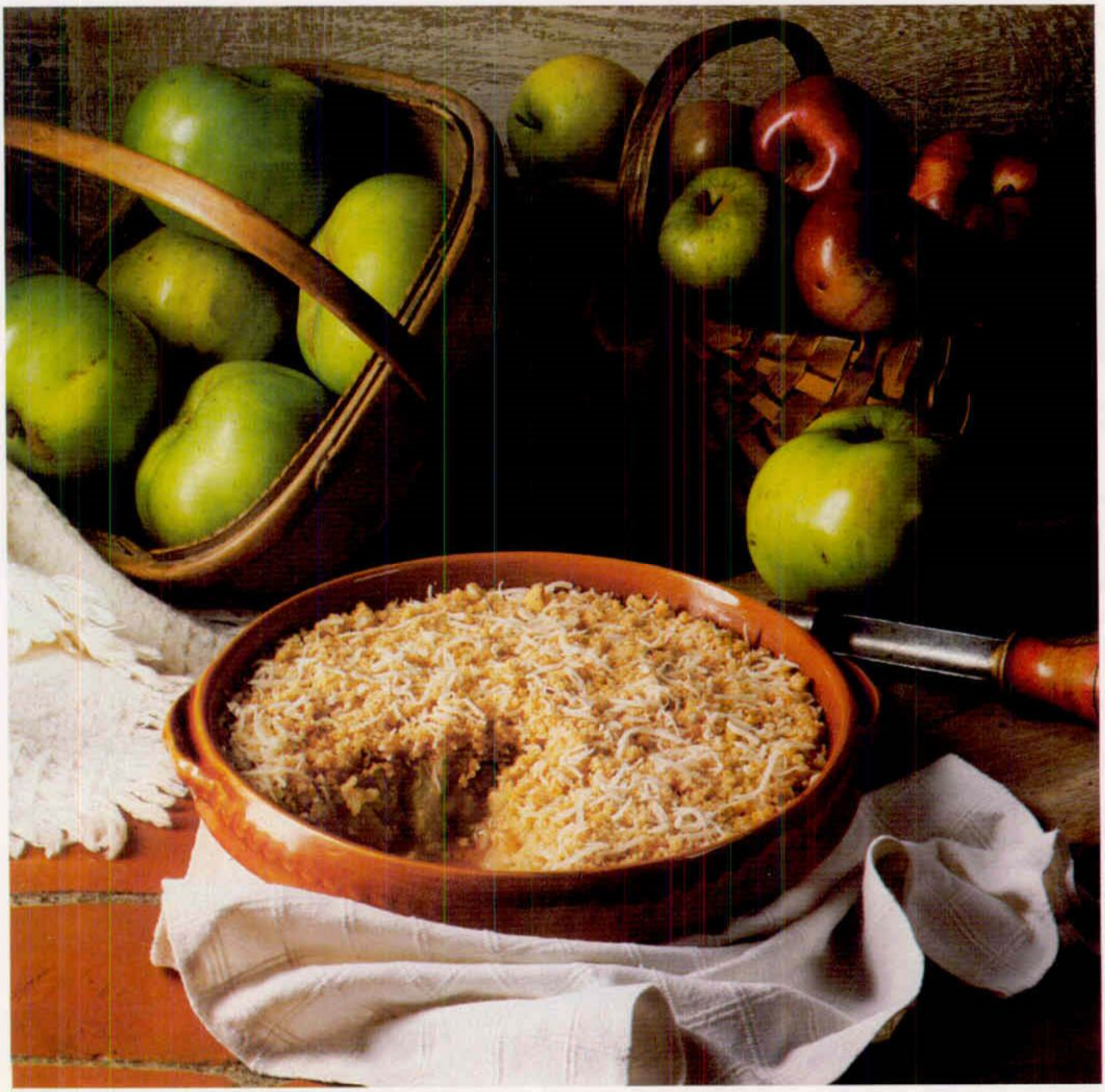
Cooking apples in a microwave is guaranteed to be successful. Baked, stewed or made into pies, the fruit tastes fresh and retains its natural colouring.

Apples are one of the most popular fruits. They go well in savoury or sweet dishes, or can be made into sauces or stuffings where their sharpness offsets the richness of meat.

Both cooking and dessert apples can be used for microwaving, providing they have a good flavour. Substitute dessert apples in these recipes, if liked. The flesh softens quickly — baked apples can be ready in 8 minutes, stewed apples in only 6 minutes.

Store apples in a polythene bag, loosely tied, in a cool place.

Apple Crisp



Crispy cheese sandwiches

4½ mins

Standing time: none

The heat from the browning dish browns the bread and melts the cheese. To prepare several sandwiches, microwave each for 15-20 seconds after browning.

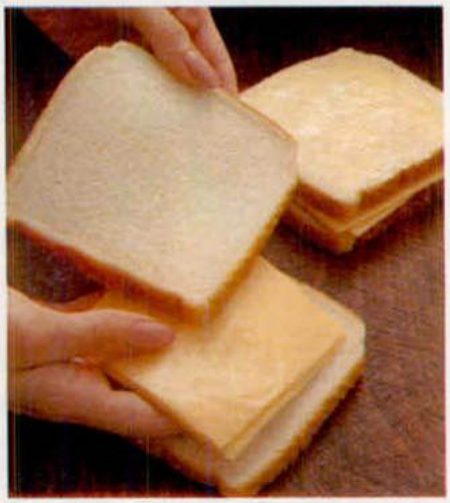
2 slices bread
butter or margarine for spreading
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, sliced

MAKES 1 SANDWICH

1 Heat the browning dish (see steps). Butter the slices and sandwich together with cheese.
2 Place on the browning dish. Leave for 15-20 seconds. Turn over and repeat.

How to microwave Crispy cheese sandwiches

Preheat *a browning dish for 4-5 minutes in the microwave cooker at 100% (High) or heat according to the manufacturer's instructions.*



Place *cheese between bread. Butter outside of sandwich on both sides. Place on the dish for 15-20 seconds. Turn over and repeat.*

THEO BERGSTROM

Apple crisp

10 mins

Standing time: none

900g / 2lb cooking apples, peeled and thinly sliced
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
75g / 3oz sugar
2.5ml / ½tsp ground cinnamon
30ml / 2tbls plain flour

TOPPING
75g / 3oz plain flour
75g / 3oz demerara sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground cinnamon
50g / 2oz butter or margarine
2 digestive biscuits, crushed
30g / 1oz long-strand coconut

SERVES 6-8

1 Combine the apples, lemon juice, sugar, cinnamon and flour in a shallow 1.1L / 2pt dish.
2 To make the topping, mix the flour, sugar and spices in a bowl, rub in the butter, then add the crumbs and half the coconut.
3 Spread the topping evenly over the apples and microwave at 100% (High) for 10 minutes, turning the dish twice during the cooking. Sprinkle over remaining coconut.

Cinnamon apple pie

16 mins

Standing time: none

700g / 1½lb cooking apples, peeled and thinly sliced
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
100g / 4oz brown sugar
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
2.5ml / ½tsp ground cinnamon
22cm / 8½in cooked wholewheat pie case and cut-outs (see right)

SERVES 6

1 Place the apples in a 1.7L / 3pt bowl and mix well with the lemon juice, sugar, flour and cinnamon.
2 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 7 minutes. Stir after half the cooking time.
3 Spoon the apple into the prepared pie case, smooth level and arrange pastry cut-outs on top. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute to reheat.

Wholewheat pie case

8 mins

Standing time: none

40g / 1½oz white vegetable fat
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
150g / 5oz wholewheat flour
pinch of salt
45ml / 3tbls cold water

MAKES A 22cm/ /8½in PIE CASE

1 Rub the fats into the flour and salt until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Stir in the water and knead very lightly to bind.
2 Place aside one third of the dough. Roll out remainder thinly and line a 22cm / 8½in diameter pie dish. Trim and decorate the edges neatly. Prick the base.
3 Microwave the pie case at 100% (High) for 3 minutes; rotate dish. Microwave for another 3 minutes.
4 Roll out the remaining pastry thinly and stamp out 6 shapes with a 2.5cm / 1in pastry cutter. Arrange the shapes in a circle on absorbent paper on a flat plate. Sprinkle with sugar if liked.
5 Microwave the shapes for about 2 minutes, turning each one round after 1 minute. Remove from the paper while warm.

Microtips

You can make marvellous apple sauce simply and quickly in your microwave. Follow the recipe for stewed apple (page 110), using brown sugar, and add a dash of nutmeg. Instead of stirring only once during cooking, stir every 3 minutes. After the full 8 minutes, continue to cook and stir for another 3-4 minutes, until the apples are completely puréed. For a richer sauce, add 15g / ½oz butter at the beginning of the cooking time. If you prefer a very smooth consistency, sieve or purée slightly in a blender or food processor.

Apple stuffing

4¾ mins

Standing time: none

350g / 12oz cooking apples, peeled, cored and finely chopped
100g / 4oz onion, finely chopped
1 celery stalk, chopped
40g / 1½oz butter or margarine
60ml / 4tbls water
½ chicken stock cube
175g / 6oz fresh white or brown breadcrumbs
5ml / 1tsp dried parsley
large pinch of salt
large pinch of pepper
25g / 1oz nuts, chopped
25g / 1oz raisins

MAKES ABOUT 575ml / 1pt STUFFING

1 Combine the apples, onion, celery and butter in a 2L / 3½pt bowl. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes or until tender.
2 Measure the water into a cup and microwave for 45 seconds or until almost boiling. Dissolve the stock cube in the water and stir into the apple mixture.
3 Mix in the crumbs, parsley, salt and pepper, nuts and raisins.

Stewed apples

6 mins

Standing time: 2 mins

450g / 1lb cooking apples
50-75g / 2-3oz granulated or demerara sugar
30ml / 2tbls water
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
2.5-5ml / ½-1tsp cinnamon or nutmeg (optional)

SERVES 3-4

Choose *apples which are firm, smooth-skinned and free of bruises. Some apples are crisper than others and are particularly suitable for pies, crisps and stuffings. The skin of all apples should be bright coloured and healthy looking.*

How to microwave Stewed apples

Peel, *core and slice the apples evenly and thinly. Place them in a 1.1L / 2pt deep pie dish.*

Stir *in the sugar, water, lemon juice and cinnamon or nutmeg. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 6-8 minutes until just soft. Leave to stand for 2 minutes before serving.*

Super snacks for kids

Use your microwave to rustle up great snacks and drinks for children. From substantial hamburgers to frothy hot chocolate, your versatile microwave will produce kids' snacks in moments.

Microwaving is an ideal way to conjure up quick snacks for your children, with the minimum of time, effort and mess. Whatever the time of day, when the kids come home ravenous and expecting to be fed then and there, you can oblige with the help of your microwave cooker and produce the hot drinks and nibbles they love, literally in a few seconds.

All the recipes here use ingredients which you would normally have in your store cupboard, refrigerator or freezer and they require little preparation — older children will find them easy to make by themselves.

Children adore the warming Hot Chocolate and deliciously refreshing Home-made Lemonade. They will be amazed at how quickly you can rustle up tasty Pizza Crackers for them to nibble while you cook these perennial favourites, Hot Dogs and Hamburgers. For a variation, why not try adding a slice of Cheddar cheese or some finely sliced onion rings before assembling the hamburger? For a really substantial snack, serve the burgers or Hot Dogs with the piquant Potato Salad; you can save chilling time by serving this warm — make it with salad dressing instead of mayonnaise in this case.

No pudding in the house? What child could resist a gooey Mini Mallow Nibble instead? You may find this becomes a regular teatime treat!

THEO BERGSTROM

Home-made lemonade

2 mins

Standing time: none

juice of 2 lemons
grated zest of 1 lemon
100g / 4oz sugar
30ml / 2tbls water
lemon slices, to serve (optional)

SERVES 4-6

1 Combine all the ingredients in a large jug and mix well. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes, stirring twice during cooking.

2 Cool the mixture, then chill in the refrigerator until very cold.

3 To serve, dilute 50ml / 2fl oz of the lemonade with 275ml / ½pt iced water. Decorate with lemon slices, if wished.

VARIATION

Substitute 15-30ml / 1-2 tbls clear honey for the sugar.

Baked apples

8 mins

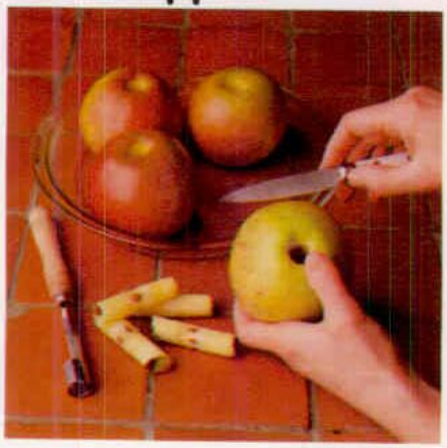
Standing time: 2-3 mins

4 × 225g / 8oz cooking apples
25g / 1oz brown sugar
90ml / 6tbls fresh orange juice or cider
40g /1½oz raisins
2.5-5ml / ½-1tsp ground cinnamon or nutmeg
50g / 2oz caster sugar (optional)
50g / 2oz butter (optional)
orange zest to decorate

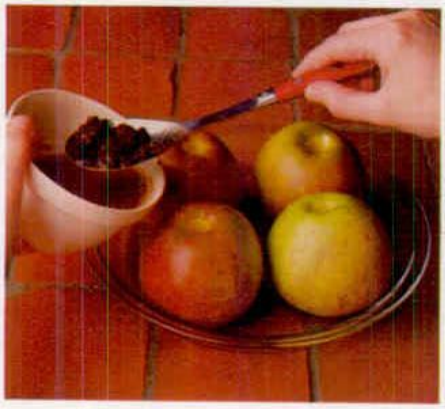
SERVES 4

RAY DUNS

How to microwave Baked apples



Core *the apples and score the skin around the edge of each one. Place the apples in a 23cm / 9in round or 20cm / 8in square baking dish, leaving the centre of each apple empty.*



Mix *the brown sugar with the orange juice or cider, raisins and cinnamon or nutmeg, and pour round the apples. Cover the dish with cling film rolled back at one edge.*

Microwave, *uncovered, at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes, or until almost tender, spooning the sauce over the apples and rotating the dish ½ turn after half the cooking time.*

Leave *to stand for 2-3 minutes. Spoon the raisin mixture into the centre and, if liked, mash the butter and sugar together and place a spoonful on top of the apples. Decorate with orange zest.*

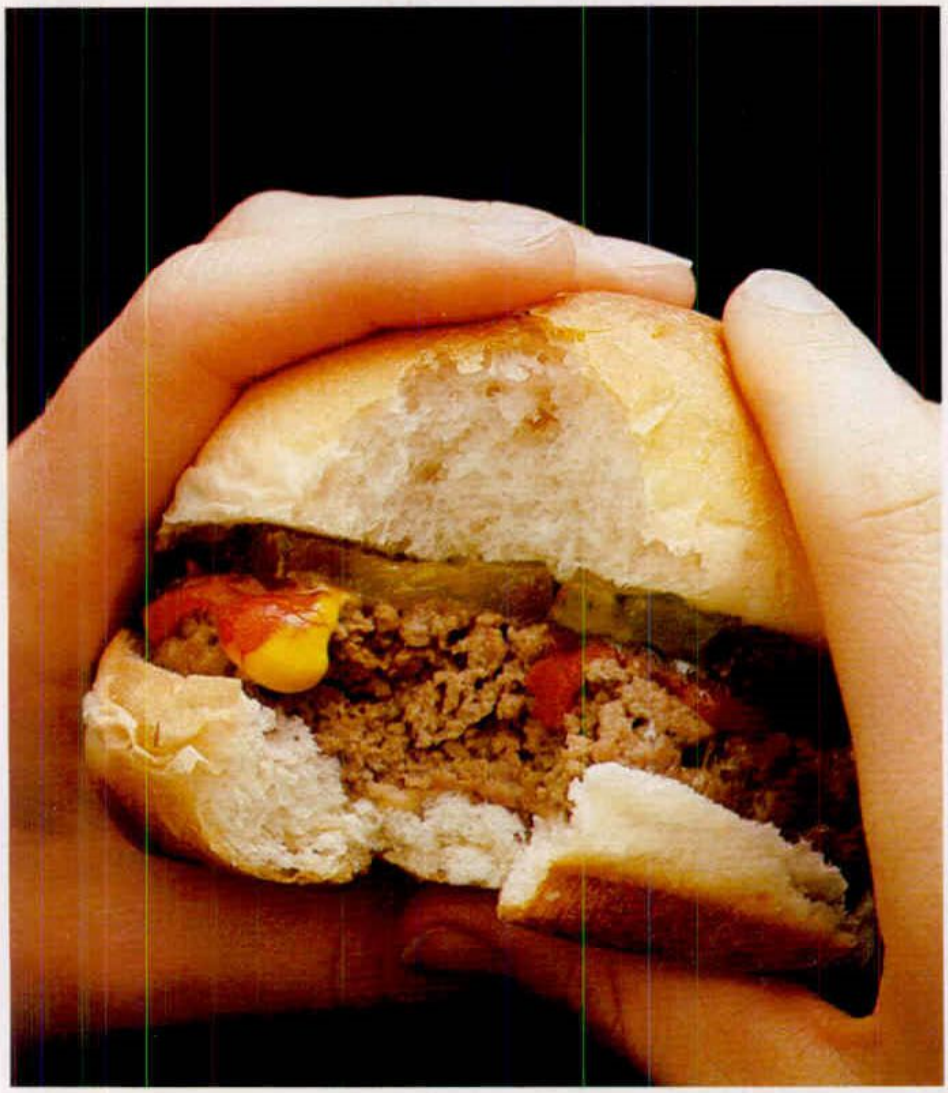
Hamburger

1½ mins

Standing time: 1-2 mins

100g / 4oz hamburger
1 hamburger bun
slices of pickled dill cucumber, tomato, fresh cucumber or lettuce leaves, or any combination of these
tomato ketchup, mustard or mayonnaise

SERVES 1



1 Place the hamburger on a microwave roasting rack. Cover with some absorbent paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute.
2 Turn over and re-cover. Microwave for a further 30 seconds-1½ minutes, or until the meat is no longer pink. Leave to stand for 1-2 minutes.
3 Split the bun and place the hamburger on the bottom half. Spread tomato ketchup and / or mustard or mayonnaise over the hamburger. Arrange the slices of pickled dill cucumber and any other salad, if using, on top of this. Spoon a little mayonnaise over the salad if wished and top with the other half of the bun.

For two hamburgers: prepare as above but microwave the first side for 1½ minutes; turn. Microwave the second side for 1½-2 minutes.

Hot dog

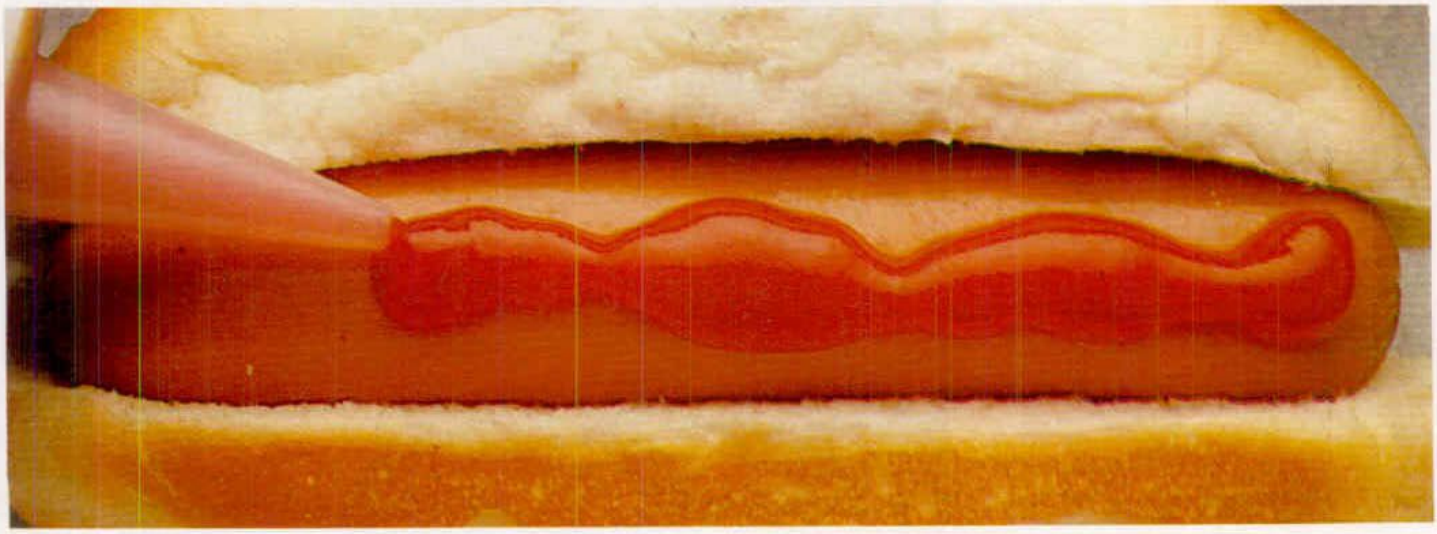
30 secs

Standing time: none

1 hot dog sausage
1 bun the same size as the hot dog
tomato ketchup or mustard

SERVES 1

1 Place the hot dog in the bun and wrap in absorbent paper.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 30-45 seconds or until the bun is warm to the touch, turning over after half the cooking time. Serve with tomato ketchup or mustard.



Hot chocolate

1¼ mins

Standing time: none

200ml / 7fl oz milk
10ml / 2tsp drinking chocolate

SERVES 1

1 Place the milk in a mug; blend in the chocolate. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1¼-2¼ minutes or until hot (76°C / 170°F).
2 If desired, top with chocolate chips or whipped cream.

Pizza crackers

30 secs

Standing time: none

4 sesame crackers
30ml / 2tbls bottled pizza or spaghetti sauce
1 slice Mozzarella cheese, quartered
4 thin slices pepperoni sausage

SERVES 1

1 Spread the crackers with the pizza or spaghetti sauce. Top each with a cheese quarter and a slice of pepperoni.
2 Place on a paper plate and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 30-60 seconds, or until the cheese melts, rotating the plate ½ turn after half the cooking time.

Potato salad

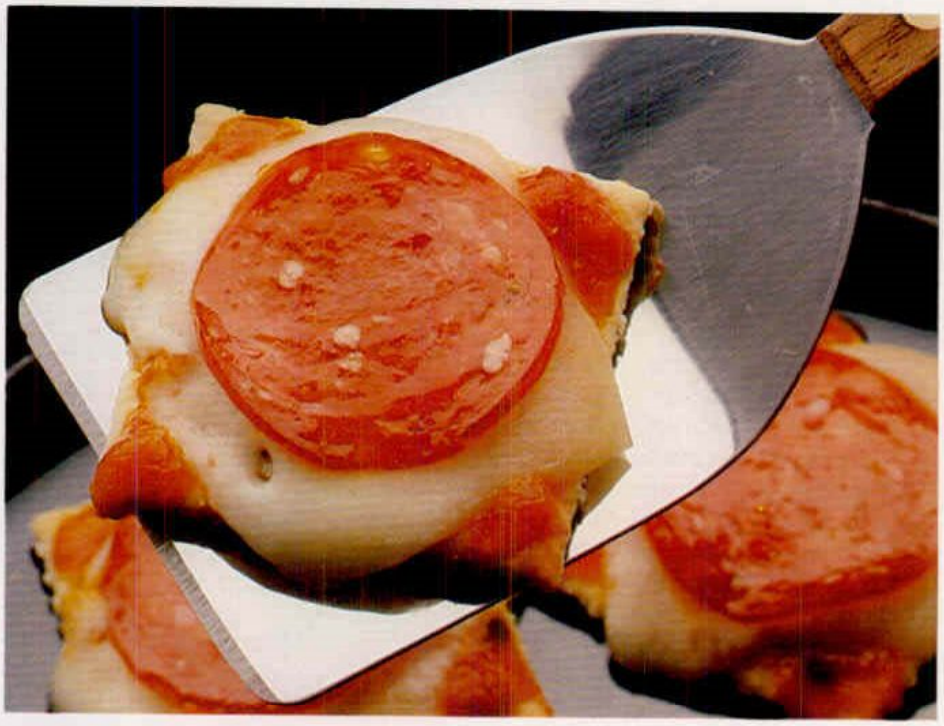
2½ mins

Standing time: none

1 potato,weighing 175-225g / 6-8oz
15ml / 1tbls water
30ml / 2tbls mayonnaise or salad dressing
1 celery stalk, chopped
1.5ml / ¼tsp mustard powder
salt and pepper
chopped fresh chives (optional)

SERVES 1

1 Peel the potato and cut it into 2cm / ¾in cubes. Place in a small bowl and sprinkle over the water. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 2½-4 minutes, or until the potato cubes feel tender when pierced with a fork, stirring gently after half the cooking time. Set aside and allow to cool.
3 In a small bowl, mix together the mayonnaise, celery, mustard, salt, pepper and chives, if using. Spoon over the potatoes and toss to coat thoroughly.



Mini mallow nibbles

1 min

Standing time: 1 min

2 digestive or wheatmeal biscuits
1 square of milk chocolate or 6 chocolate chips
1 large marshmallow, chopped

SERVES 1

1 Place one biscuit on absorbent paper. Top with the chocolate and microwave at 100% (High) for 45 seconds.
2 Add the marshmallow and microwave at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds, until the marshmallow puffs up. Top with the other biscuit and leave to stand for 1 minute.

Salmon steaks in dill sauce

12½ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

4 fresh or thawed 175g / 6oz salmon steaks (see Freezer note)
parsley sprigs and lemon slices

SAUCE
50g / 2oz butter
60ml / 4tbls lemon juice
15ml / 1tbls whole sesame seeds
1.5ml / ¼tsp sugar
2.5ml / ½tsp dillweed
1 garlic clove, crushed with salt

SERVES 4

1 Combine all the sauce ingredients in a measuring jug. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1½ minutes until the sauce is hot and the butter has melted. Stir once during cooking.
2 Arrange the salmon steaks in a shallow dish and brush them with a little of the sauce. Cover with greaseproof paper and microwave at 50% (Medium) for about 10 minutes until the fish is almost cooked. Rearrange the fish after 6 minutes to ensure even cooking. Leave to stand for 5 minutes.
3 Lift the fish onto a serving dish. Reheat the remaining sauce for 1 minute, stir and pour over the fish. Garnish with parsley and lemon.

Freezer Notes

To thaw 4 x 175g / 6oz frozen salmon steaks, unwrap and place in a shallow dish covered with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 5 minutes. Turn and rearrange fish to bring less thawed parts to the top and outside of the dish. Continue microwaving for 5 minutes or until the fish is just pliable on the outside but remains icy in the centre. Leave to stand for 5-10 minutes until completely thawed, then pat dry with a piece of absorbent paper. Use the fish immediately.

Microtips

As fish varies in thickness and density according to type, it is difficult to give very accurate thawing times, so watch carefully during the second half of thawing in case the thinner parts start to cook. If this should happen, remove the fish from the oven immediately, cover loosely with foil, shiny side in, and leave at room temperature until just thawed.

Remember that once fish has been thawed, micro-organic activity will start and the fish will spoil if it is not cooked immediately. Arrange your schedule so that cooking follows on directly. Never leave a thawed fish out for any length of time.

STAR RECIPE

Salmon steaks

Salmon steaks cook superbly in a microwave and taste like freshly caught fish. The quick cooking ensures they retain all their moisture and firm texture. Served with a sesame and dill-flavoured sauce, they make a memorable meal.

Fish cooked in the microwave retains all its delicate flavour and, unlike meat, does not need browning to appear appetising. It is very important not to overcook fish, whether cooking conventionally or in the microwave, as it will become tough.

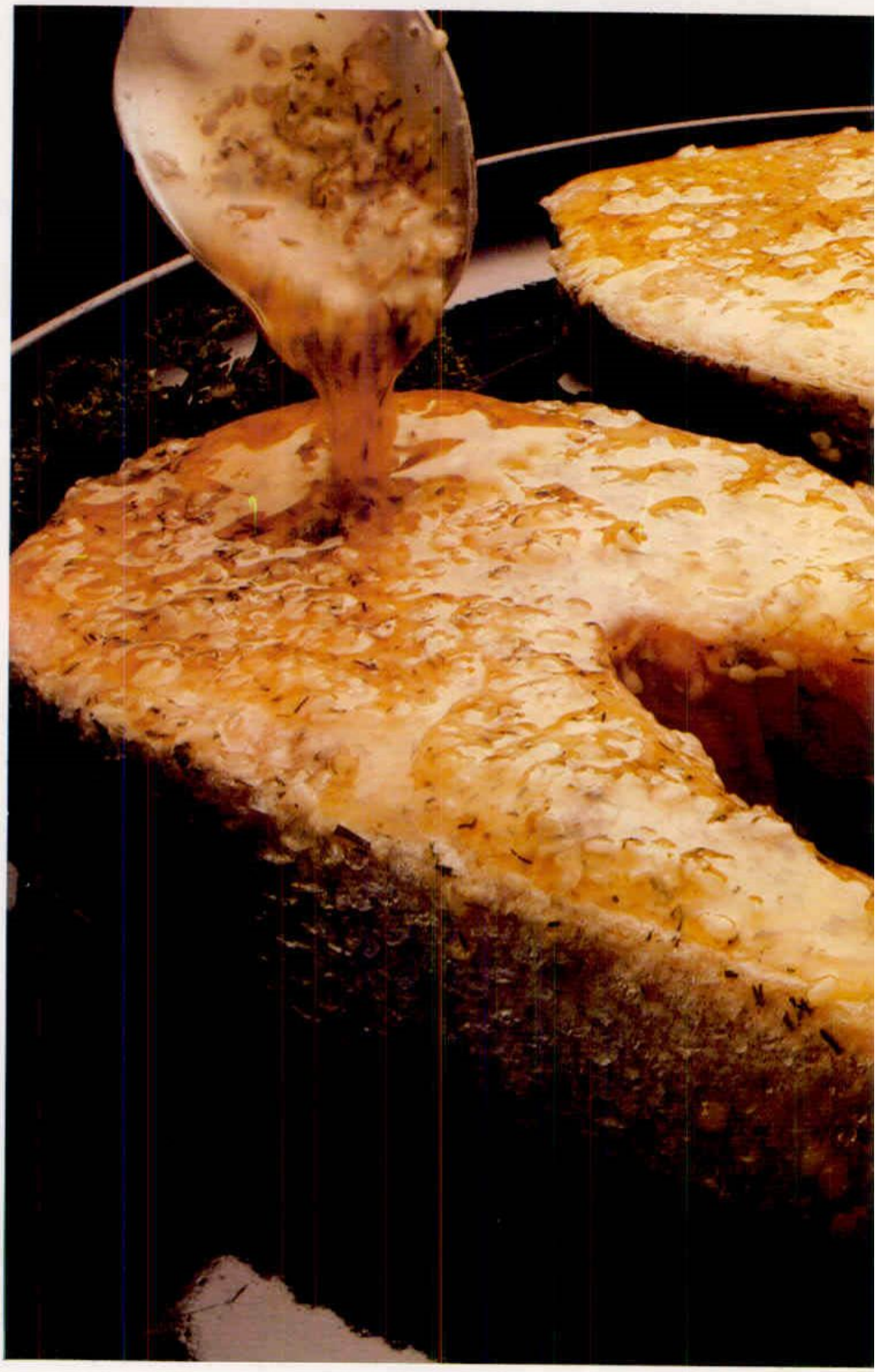
When cooking in the microwave, it is best to remove the fish from the cooker when it is just cooked on the outside, as it will complete the cooking during the standing time.

Don't be afraid to open the door of the cooker and test the fish with a fork — it will flake and appear opaque in colour when just done. Don't be tempted to let the fish stay longer in the cooker and decrease the standing time — the standing time of around 5 minutes is essential for cooking the centre of the fish.

To ensure even cooking, place the thicker portion of the steaks near the edge of the dish, with the thinner 'tails' towards the centre. This 'thicker out-, thinner in' rule applies to all cuts of fish when they are being cooked in a microwave.

This simple but elegant recipe combines the subtle flavours of sesame seeds and dill, which complement the salmon* without overpowering its flavour. Other herbs and flavourings can be used in the basic sauce just as successfully. Substitute flaked almonds for the sesame seeds and tarragon for the dill, or 5-6 juniper berries and a pinch of black pepper.

To make the recipe slightly more economical while still retaining the delicious flavour, use the tail-end cuts of the salmon, which are smaller and cheaper than cuts from the head end.



*In Australia and New Zealand, substitute with either Jewfish or Snapper steaks of the same size.

Make and frost a sponge cake

Cakes can be cooked very quickly in the microwave. As they do not brown like conventional cakes, give them a touch of colour with one of the exciting frostings shown here.

One of the simplest and most versatile cakes to make in your microwave is a basic Victoria sponge, made with an 'all in one' mixture. A microwaved sponge feels heavier than a conventionally cooked cake, but the taste and texture are beautifully moist. The cake can be split and sandwiched together with jam, lemon curd or frosting.

Because plain sponge cakes do not brown when cooked by microwave, they do look much more attractive when decorated with a complementary frosting.

Victoria sponge cake

5½ mins

Standing time: 10 mins

175g / 6oz butter or margarine, softened
175g / 6oz self-raising flour
2.5ml / ½tsp baking powder
175g / 6oz caster sugar
3 eggs
30-45ml / 2-3tbls milk
frosting (see page 96)

MAKES A 20cm / 8in ROUND CAKE OR A 22 x 22cm / 8½ x 8½in SQUARE CAKE

This cake has been tested on all four standard wattages. See the cooking times below.

Wattage	Round	Square
700	5½-7½	7-9
650	6-8	7½-9½
600	7-9	8-10
500	8-10	9-11

Frostings *pictured left to right* **Top row:** *Chocolate Hazelnut, Buttercream, Maple* **2nd row:** *Lemon, Butterscotch, Orange* **3rd row:** *Peanut Butter, Chocolate, Browned Butter* **Bottom row:** *Coffee, Cherry nut, Butternut.*

How to microwave a Victoria sponge cake

Grease *a 20cm / 8in soufflé dish or shallow 22 x 22cm / 8½ x 8½in square dish and line the base with greased greaseproof paper.*

Beat *together the butter, flour, baking powder, sugar, eggs and enough milk to give a soft dropping consistency. Spoon into the dish.*

Microwave *the round cake at 100% (High) for 5½-7½ minutes, until a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean. Rotate the dish ¼ turn every 2 minutes for even cooking.*

If making *the square cake, microwave it at 100% (High) for 7-9 minutes, until the top springs back when lightly pressed. Rotate the dish ¼ turn every minute for even cooking.*

Leave *the cake to stand in the dish for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack. Remove paper and let cool.*

Split *in half and sandwich with jam when the cake is cold. Sieve icing sugar over the top or frost as desired.*

Chocolate frosting

2 mins

Standing time: 3-5 mins

30ml / 2tbls cocoa powder
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
30ml / 1fl oz milk
225g / 8oz icing sugar
2.5ml / ½tsp mint flavouring

1 In a bowl, combine the cocoa, butter and milk. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 2 minutes, stirring after 1½ minutes.
2 Stir in remaining ingredients. Leave to stand for 3-5 minutes. Beat frosting until smooth and of spreading consistency.

VARIATION
Chocolate Hazelnut: Add 25g / 1oz hazelnuts to the chocolate mixture before microwaving. Omit the mint.

Lemon frosting

½ min

Standing time: none

15g / ½oz butter or margarine
7.5ml / 1½tsp cream or milk
7.5ml / 1½tsp lemon juice
2.5ml / ½tsp grated lemon zest
pinch of salt
225g / 8oz icing sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp vanilla flavouring
1-2 drops yellow food colouring

1 In a mixing bowl, combine the butter, cream or milk, lemon juice, grated zest and salt. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 30-40 seconds, or until the mixture has started bubbling.
2 Add the sugar, vanilla and colouring. Beat until smooth and of a spreading consistency; thin with a few drops of cream or milk if the frosting is too thick.

VARIATIONS
Orange: Substitute 30ml / 2tbls orange juice for the cream and lemon juice and 10ml / 2tsp orange zest for the lemon.
Cherry Nut: For more colour, use 15ml / 1tbls bottled cherry juice for the lemon juice and omit the zest. After microwaving, stir in 30ml / 2tbls each chopped maraschino cherries and walnuts, together with the sugar. Omit food colouring.

Microtips

Leftover frosting can be stored in the refrigerator. Soften cold frosting by microwaving at 100% (High) for a few seconds.

Luscious, moist sponge cake is coated with lemon frosting and filled with lemon curd.

Romantic dinner for two

Celebrate a birthday or impress a very special friend with a romantic dinner for two. This delicious meal is simply and quickly prepared with the help of a microwave.

When there are just two of you for dinner, you want to spend as much time as possible together. This is when the microwave really comes into its own, both for advance preparation of food and last minute cooking and re-heating.

Most of the preparation for this menu can be done well ahead. The Creamy Veal takes only a few minutes to make and tastes even better if made the day before and left, covered, in the refrigerator, to allow the flavours to blend.

Veal has very little fat so it is best cooked in a liquid such as the sauce used in this menu. The creamy sauce complements the flavour of the veal as well as helping to prevent it drying out. Pasta is the perfect accompaniment.

All the vegetable, salad and fruit preparation for the meal can be done early in the day and they can then be kept cool in the refrigerator until required.

Then, with the meal well under control, you can focus your attention on the table and set the scene to suit the occasion.

Use a sparkling white table cloth or a pale-coloured one with a lace cloth over the top. Decorate the table with a pair of coloured candles and arrange an attractive centrepiece of flowers.

By the time your guest arrives, everything will be well in hand and you will be able to enjoy a pre-dinner aperitif while the microwave is gently reheating the veal. The broccoli needs only a few minutes cooking and the delicious, liqueur-flavoured cappuccino provides a flourish for the end of the meal and a final excuse to linger at the dinner table.

Countdown

The day before
Cook the veal, omitting the fresh parsley. Cover and refrigerate until required. Remove from the refrigerator 1 hour before it needs reheating to allow to come to room temperature.

Early in the day
Prepare the salad for the Lettuce Cups; cover and refrigerate. Fry the bread cubes. Wash and drain the grapes and arrange in fruit bowl; trim the broccoli. Cover and refrigerate grapes and broccoli.

1 hour before serving
Fry the bacon for the Lettuce Cups and cut into 1cm / ½in pieces with kitchen scissors. Remove the salad from the refrigerator and fill with the chopped tomato, egg, bacon and the croûtons. Prepare the dressing, but do not spoon it over the salad until just before serving.

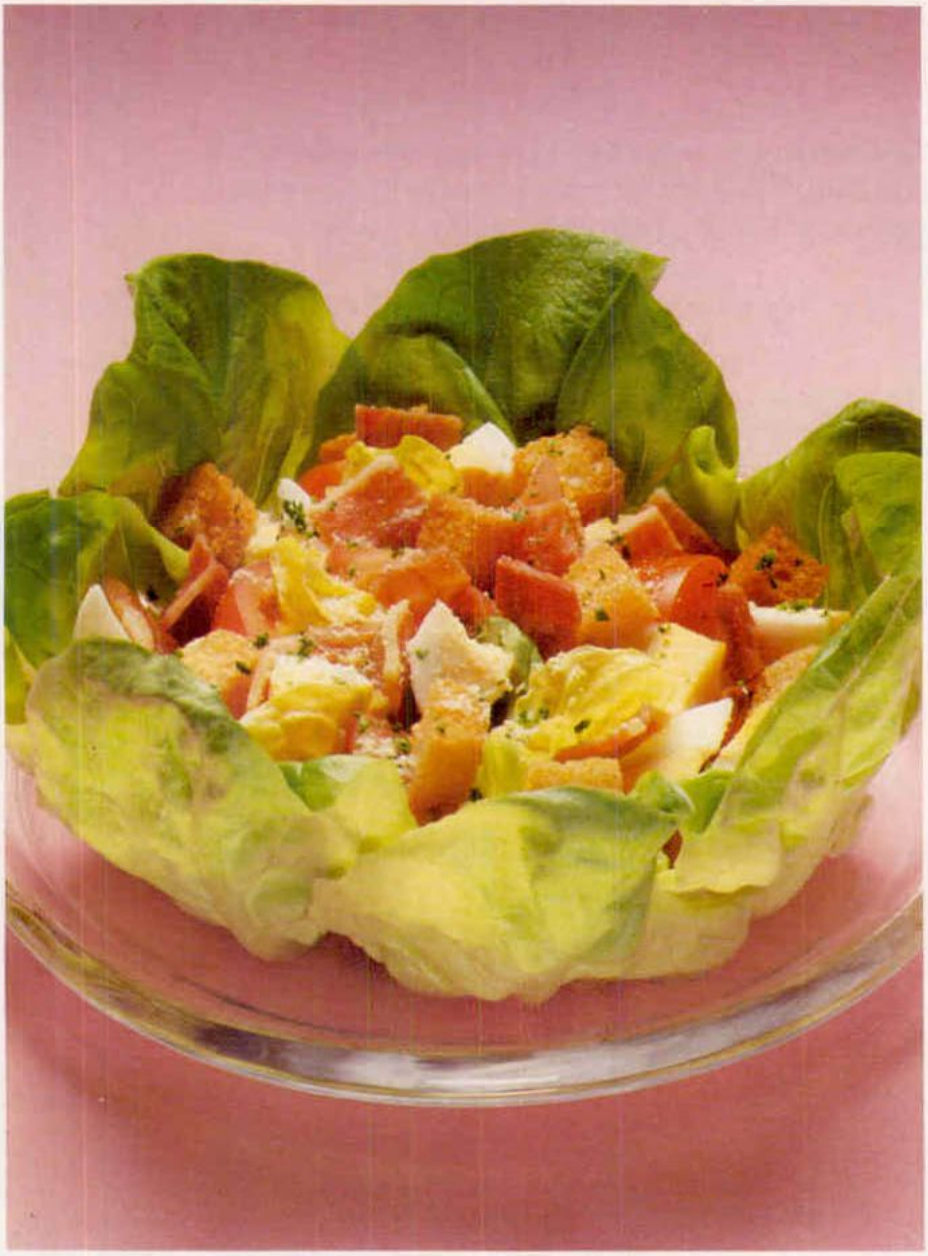
Remove the grapes from the refrigerator to allow them to come to room temperature before the meal.

About 20-25 minutes before serving
Cook pasta conventionally. Rinse broccoli and microwave. Leave to stand. Add the parsley to veal, cover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 7-8 minutes, stirring once during microwaving.

Between the first course and main course
Dot the broccoli with some butter and microwave for 30-45 seconds to reheat. Spoon veal over pasta.

After the main course
Serve black grapes and cheeses. Microwave and serve cappuccino.

Sprinkle *the measured quantities of sugar and coffee over the hot water and stir in until dissolved.*



How to prepare Lettuce cups

Microwave *the bacon between 2 pieces of absorbent paper, then cut into 1cm / ½in pieces. Use 6 to 8 lettuce leaves to form each cup.*

Fill *the cups with the salad ingredients; do not press down too firmly. Spoon the dressing over the cups; sprinkle with parsley and cheese.*

Lettuce cups

2 mins

Standing time: none

SALAD

2 bacon rashers, rinds removed
1 small head round lettuce
2 tomatoes, chopped
2 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
1 medium slice bread, cut into 1cm / ½in cubes and fried

DRESSING

90ml / 6tbls olive oil
30ml / 2tbls red wine vinegar
salt and pepper
large pinch of mustard powder

GARNISH

2.5m/ / ½tsp chopped parsley
2.5ml / ½tsp grated Parmesan cheese

SERVES 2

1 Place bacon between 2 pieces of absorbent paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-2½ minutes. Cut into 1cm / ½in pieces.
2 Use 12 or 16 lettuce leaves and arrange on 2 small plates to form cups. Chop or tear the remaining lettuce and use to fill the cups.
3 Sprinkle the lettuce with chopped tomato, egg, croûtons and bacon.
4 Combine the oil and vinegar. Then mix in the remaining dressing ingredients. Spoon over the salad. Sprinkle with garnishes.

Broccoli spears

When cooking fresh broccoli, remember that the cooking time will be affected by the thickness and tenderness of the stalks. Select heads approximately the same size with even-sized stalks. Position the stalks towards the outside of the dish, as the heads are less dense than the stalks and cook more quickly. Pierce the stalks with a fork to test when cooked.

The broccoli should be covered with cling film, rolled back at one edge for the steam to escape, so that the stalks remain full and do not shrivel during cooking. It should come out crisp and bright green.

Fresh broccoli: Trim and prepare 225g / 8oz broccoli spears. Arrange them in a shallow dish and add 60ml / 4tbls water. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes, turning once. Serve hot with melted butter.

Frozen broccoli: Remove 225g / 8oz frozen spears from the packet. Place in a shallow dish with 30ml / 2tbls water. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes, separate spears, then continue cooking for 3-4 minutes. Serve hot with melted butter.

Creamy veal

9 mins

Standing time: 3-5 mins (optional)

20ml / 4tsp plain flour
large pinch of salt
large pinch of pepper
350g / 12oz lean, boneless veal loin, cut into 2cm / ¾in cubes
40g / 1½oz butter
75ml / 5tbls half cream or milk
30ml / 2tbls dry white wine
10ml / 2tsp chopped fresh parsley
100-150g / 4-5oz tagliatelle

SERVES 2

1 Combine 15ml / 1tbls flour with the salt and pepper in a plastic bag. Add the meat and shake until the meat is completely coated
2 Melt the butter in a 1.1L / 2pt casserole at 100% (High) for about 1 minute or until melted.
3 Stir the meat and remaining flour into the butter. Mix in the cream or milk, white wine and chopped fresh parsley.
4 Cover and cook at 50% (Medium) for about 8-9 minutes or until the meat feels tender when pierced with a fork. Stir well once during the cooking and at the end of the cooking time. Leave to stand for 3-5 minutes if you need extra time for other preparation.
5 Meanwhile, cook the tagliatelle conventionally.
6 Drain the pasta and arrange on a serving dish. Spoon over the veal and sauce to cover.

Grapes and Italian cheeseboard

100g / 4oz Fontina or smoked Emmental
100g / 4oz Dolcelatte
100g / 4oz Bel Paese
selection of cheese biscuits
225g / 8oz black grapes

1 Unwrap the cheeses and slice the Fontina or smoked Emmental into about 4 pieces. Arrange these in an overlapping row on a cheeseboard or dish, together with the Dolcelatte, Bel Paese and cheese biscuits.
2 Wash the grapes and place in a glass bowl.

Cappuccino for two

3 mins

Standing time: none

275ml / ½pt cold water
10ml / 2tsp light brown soft sugar
10ml / 2tsp coffee granules
60ml / 4tbls orange-liqueur
30ml / 2tbls sweetened cream

1 Microwave the water in a jug at 100% (High) for about 2 minutes.
2 Stir in sugar and coffee. Heat at 100% (High) for 1 minute; then stir well adding the liqueur.
3 Pour the cappuccino into 2 cups and top with the cream, whipped.

FREEZING KNOW-HOW 4

Freezing vegetables

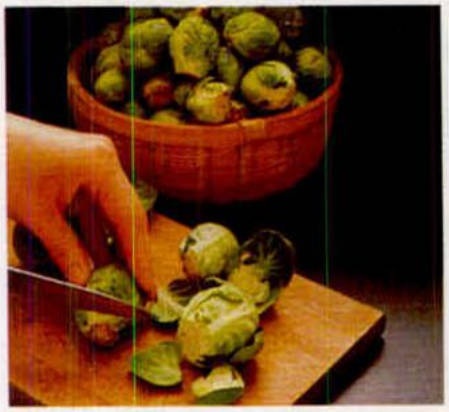
Use your microwave as an aid in preparing vegetables for the freezer, and for serving at meal times. It will keep them bright and crisp, while your kitchen stays steam-free.

The microwave cooker can blanch batches of fresh vegetables for the freezer most successfully. If you are a home gardener, harvest young vegetables as they reach their peak. If you buy from a greengrocer, or from pick-your-own farms, select the youngest, prime-quality specimens. The microwave will preserve their tenderness and fresh-cooked taste — simply and efficiently.

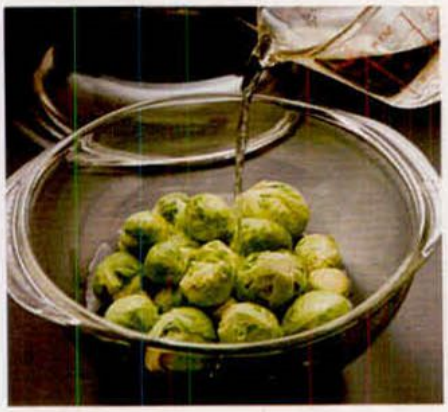
For best results, follow the quantities given in the chart on page 104. If you wish to blanch several batches, microwave the first while you clean and trim the second. Small batches will blanch more evenly and there will be less condensation in the microwave. Blanched green vegetables should still be crisp; other vegetables should be pliable but not tender.

THEO BERGSTROM

How to blanch fresh vegetables



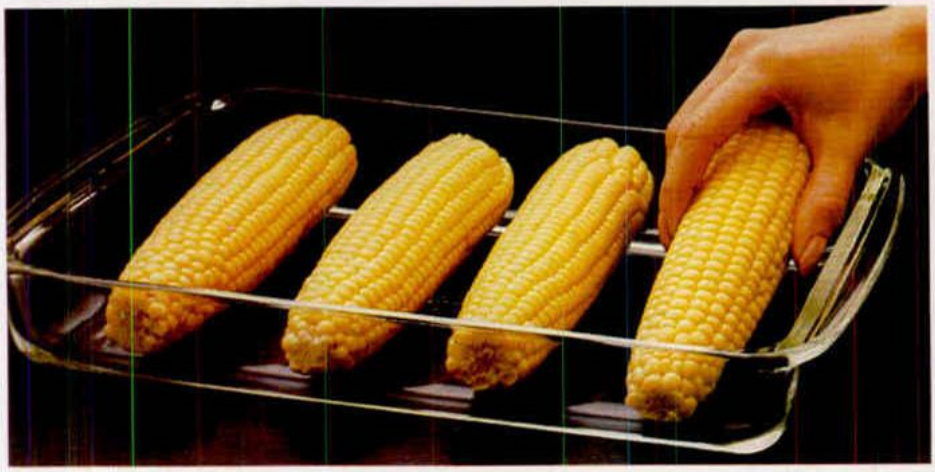
Clean *vegetables thoroughly. Cut into small pieces, if possible. Slices, 2.5cm / 1in lengths or florets microwave and freeze easily.*



Place *pieces in a casserole with the water; cover. Microwave, following timing in chart (page 104) until vegetables are pliable but crisp.*

Drain *and plunge vegetables into iced water immediately after removal from cooker. This prevents further cooking. Drain thoroughly.*

How to blanch corn-on-the-cob



Arrange *cobs in a large rectangular shallow dish. There should be plenty of space in between the cobs. Do not try to microwave more than four at a time. Add 125ml / 4fl oz water, and cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes.*

Turn *the cobs after half the cooking time. Then re-cover with cling film and continue microwaving for remainder of the cooking time.*

How to pack in plastic bags

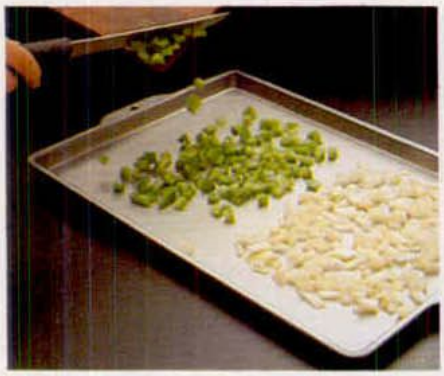
Use *heat-sealable or heavy-duty freezer bags. Insert blanched food.*

Press *out as much air as possible. Seal the bags with a heat sealer or with twist ties. Label the bags with a moisture-proof marker.*

Microwave times for blanching vegetables

TYPE	QUANTITY	MICROWAVE TIME AT 100% (HIGH)	PROCEDURE
Beans, green, whole or cut	225g / 8oz	6 minutes	2L / 3½pt covered casserole with 275ml / ½pt water. Stir twice.
Broad beans	350g / 12oz	4-5 minutes	As above.
Broccoli spears	275g / 10oz	4 minutes	As above.
Brussels sprouts	225g / 8oz	5 minutes	As above.
Carrots, sliced	350g / 12oz	5 minutes	As above.
Cauliflower florets	1 small head about 275g / 10oz	5 minutes	2L / 3½pt covered casserole with 275ml / ½pt water. Turn florets once.
Spinach or **Swiss chard**	450g / 1lb	5-6 minutes	3.7L / 6½pt covered bowl with 275ml / ½pt water. Stir three times.
Okra, whole or pieces	375g / 12oz	5-5½ minutes	2L / 3½pt covered casserole with 275ml / ½pt water. Stir twice.
Peas, podded	225g / 8oz (about 700g/ 1½lb in pods)	4 minutes	2L / 3½pt covered casserole with 275ml½pt water. Stir once.
Courgettes, sliced	275g / 10oz	4 minutes	2L / 3½pt covered casserole with 275ml / ½pt water. Stir once.
Mushrooms, small whole or sliced	450g / 1lb	3 minutes	As above, plus 60ml / 4tbls lemon juice. Add further 30ml / 2tbls juice to the iced water.
Corn on the cob	4	10 minutes	Place cobs on 30 x 20cm / 12 x 8in baking dish. Add 125ml / 4fl oz water and cover. Turn each cob once.

How to loose-pack



Spread *out small items like baby peas or small pieces of vegetable in a single layer on a baking sheet.*

Freeze *until firm. Remove from the baking sheet and place in heavy-duty plastic freezer bag.*

Squeeze *out air and seal with a twist tie. To use, remove what is needed then reseal and return to the freezer.*

Microwaving frozen vegetables

Frozen vegetables cook beautifully in your microwave. The speed of the microwave and the fact that little additional water is needed during cooking and reheating reduces the threat of sogginess and bright, flavourful vegetables are guaranteed if timing is carefully calculated. It also means that more vitamins are conserved.

Frozen vegetables can be cooked directly in their serving dishes, so saving on washing-up. Alternatively, they can be cooked in their bags as long as they are heavy-duty freezer bags. Commercially frozen vegetables can also be microwaved in their bags or pouches.

How to microwave loose vegetables

Put *the frozen vegetables into a casserole, icy side up. Add 30ml / 2tbls water. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave on 100% (High) for 2 minutes.*

Stir *and separate the vegetables from time to time. Microwave up to 250g / 9oz weight for about 9 minutes. Larger amounts may take about 15 minutes.*

How to microwave vegetables in bags

Bend *the bag, if possible, to break apart the vegetables. Dip the bag in warm water to make this easier.*

Cut *a large cross on one side of the bag. Alternatively, prick the bag with a knife tip to make vents to allow the steam to escape.*

Place *the bag, cut side down, in the serving dish. If the bag is between 175g / 6oz and 250g / 9oz, it will take between 3 and 6 minutes microwaved at 100% (High). Larger bags may take up to 8 minutes. When the vegetables are cooked, empty them into a serving dish, holding the corners to protect your hands from the steam.*

Adapting a recipe: sauces

Sauces are an essential part of any cook's repertoire. Follow the step-by-step instructions and see how to adapt your favourite sauces for cooking in the microwave.

The simple touch of a good sauce can 'make' a dish. Most sauces, even when made conventionally, are not difficult, but made in the microwave cooker they are even easier. Sauces demonstrate the advantages of microwaving beautifully. For a start, many of them can be measured, mixed and microwaved in the same container.

While different types of sauces vary in the amount of stirring needed, none of them need constant stirring as they do conventionally. And sauces like the egg-based ones that you may have regarded as a bit more tricky are made quickly and simply.

The following recipes show how basic and traditional sauces can be converted for cooking successfully in a microwave cooker. The step-by-step information shows how easy it is to convert your own favourite recipes for microwaving.

When making milk-based sauces always use a large, deep container as the sauces rise to almost double their volume when boiling. A straight-sided container will heat liquid quicker than an angled one. If adding sugar, add it at the initial blending stage.

NOTE: Milk may be replaced with half milk and half well-flavoured stock in savoury sauces.

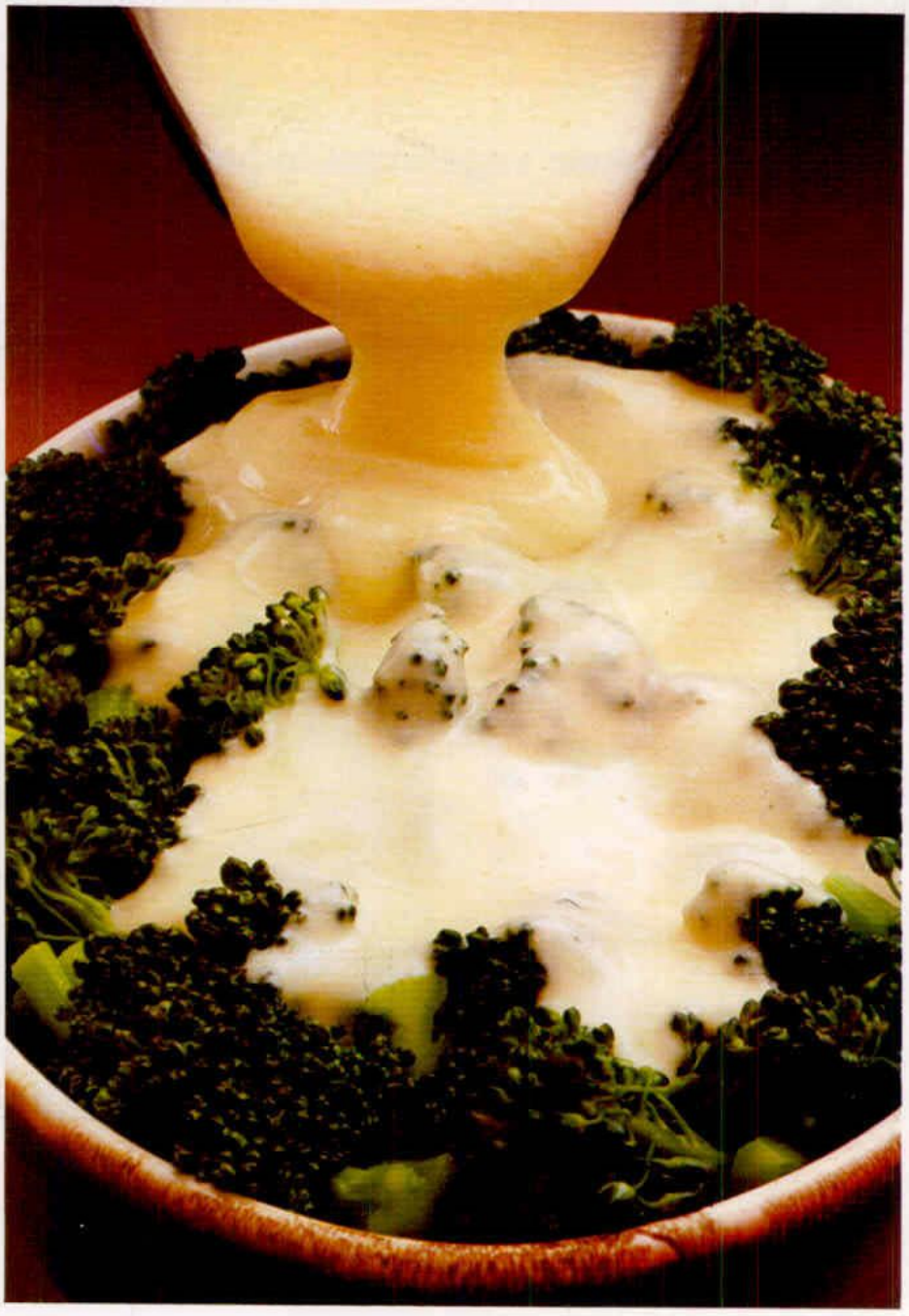
Advantages of microwaved sauces

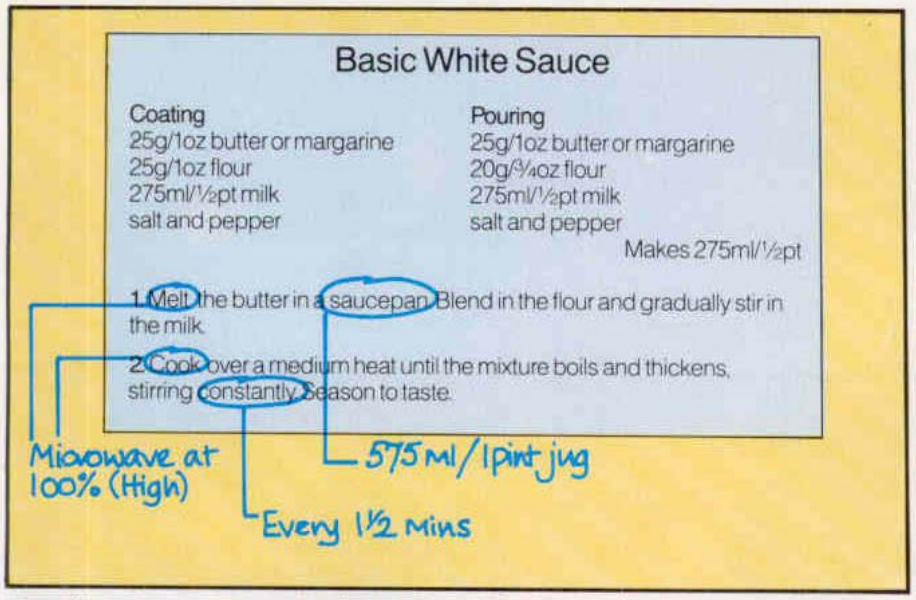
- *No risk of congealed or burned saucepans to wash up!*
- *Less washing up as the sauce can be made in a serving jug ready to take straight to the table.*
- *Microwave sauces are so quick they do not have to be made in advance but may be simply prepared when everything else is ready.*

Points to note

Stirring frequently ensures sauce is smooth and shiny. A small balloon whisk is ideal for stirring as it is the quickest and most effective way of ensuring the sauce is evenly blended.

Reheating flour-based sauces made in advance, will take about 2 minutes for 275ml / ½pt of thin (or sweet) sauce and about 3 minutes for the same quantity of thick sauce. Stir well to serve. (Sugar heats quickly in a microwave oven therefore sweet sauces will heat quicker than unsweetened ones.)




Basic White Sauce
Coating
25g/1oz butter or margarine
25g/1oz flour
275ml/½pt milk
salt and pepper
Pouring
25g/1oz butter or margarine
20g/¾oz flour
275ml/½pt milk
salt and pepper
Makes 275ml/½pt
1 Melt the butter in a saucepan. Blend in the flour and gradually stir in the milk.
2 Cook over a medium heat until the mixture boils and thickens, stirring constantly. Season to taste.
Microwave at 100% (High)
575ml/1pint jug
Every 1½ mins

Basic white sauce

5½ mins

Standing time: none

Follow the method below for making either a coating sauce or a slightly thinner pouring sauce.

COATING

25g / 1oz butter or margarine
25g / 1oz plain flour
275ml / ½pt milk
salt and pepper

POURING

25g / 1oz butter or margarine
20g / ¾oz plain flour
275ml / ½pt milk
salt and pepper

MAKES 275ml / ½pt

1 Place the butter in a 575ml / 1pt jug. Microwave at 100% (High) for about 30 seconds until the butter has just melted.
2 Stir in the flour and then blend in the milk until smooth.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for about 5 minutes, stirring every 1½ minutes, until sauce is thick and smooth. Season to taste.

VARIATIONS

Cheese: Add 75g / 3oz grated Cheddar cheese at the end of cooking time. If necessary, return sauce to cooker for a few seconds to complete melting.
Parsley: Add 30-45ml / 2-3tbls chopped parsley to the sauce.
Prawn: Stir 50g / 2oz peeled prawns, 5ml / 1tsp lemon juice and 5ml / 1tsp tomato purée into the sauce 1 minute before end of cooking time.
Mushroom: Microwave 50g / 2oz sliced mushrooms with 15g / ½oz butter for 2 minutes at 100% (High). Stir into sauce 2 minutes before the end of cooking time.
Caper: Add 15ml / 1tbls drained, finely chopped capers to sauce 1 minute before the end of cooking.
Onion: Add 1 chopped onion to the melted butter in a jug and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, or until softened.

ENRICHING A BASIC WHITE SAUCE

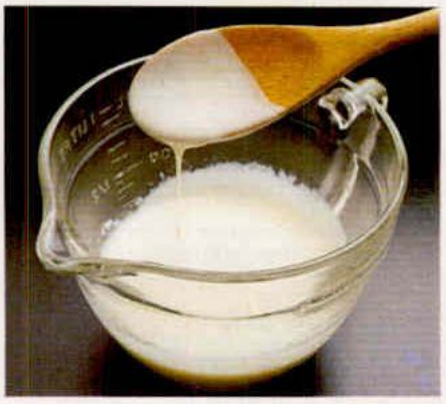
A little butter, cream or egg yolk added to a white sauce (or any of the flavour variations) gives extra richness and makes it especially good to eat.
Adding butter: Stir 15g / ½oz butter into 275ml / ½pt hot sauce before serving.
Adding egg: Beat 1 egg yolk in a bowl and gradually stir 275ml / ½pt hot sauce into the beaten egg. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute, stirring twice during cooking. Do not allow to boil.

Adding the egg by this method makes it more stable and the sauce less likely to separate.
Adding cream: Stir 50ml / 2 fl oz double or single cream into 275ml / ½pt warm coating sauce. Microwave at 100% (High) for about 1 minute. Stir well. Do not allow to boil.

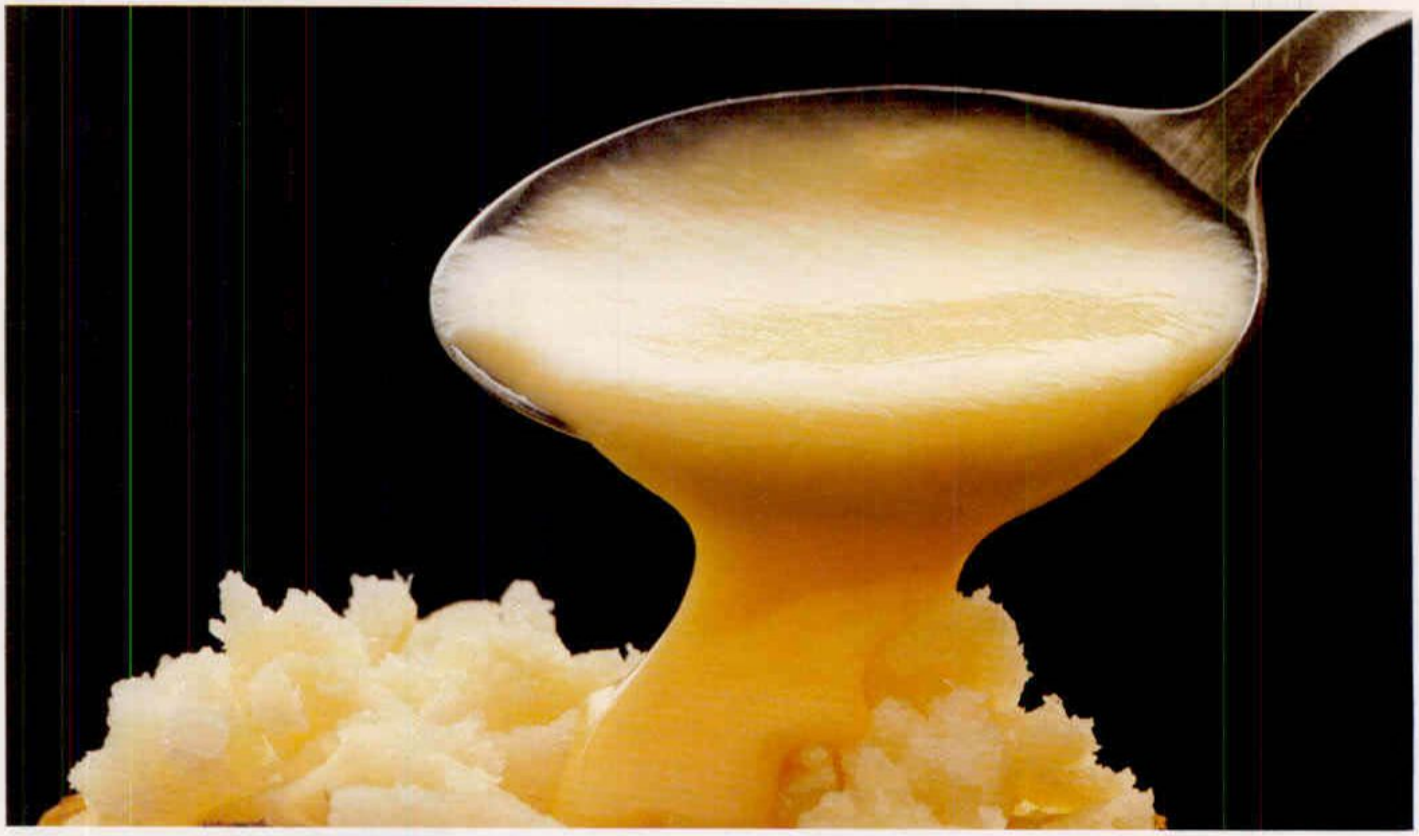
How to microwave Basic white sauce

Measure *out the butter or margarine and place in a 575ml / 1pt jug. Cover with vented cling film as it will spatter during melting.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 30 seconds until the butter has melted, stir in the flour and slowly pour in the milk, mixing with a wooden spoon until smooth. Microwave for 5 minutes.*



Stir *sauce every 1½ minutes during the microwaving time until it is thick and either coats the back of a spoon or pours from the spoon in a thin stream, depending on your requirement.*



Hollandaise Sauce

2 egg yolks (size 2)
30ml/2 tbls lemon juice or vinegar
15ml/1tbls water
large pinch salt
pinch cayenne pepper
100g/4oz butter, cut into pieces
Makes 150ml/¼pt

1. Combine the egg yolks, lemon juice or vinegar, water, salt and cayenne pepper in the top of a double boiler, beat with a wire whisk.
2. Add ⅓ butter to the egg yolk mixture and cook over hot, not boiling, water, stirring constantly until the butter melts.
3. Repeat with another ⅓ of butter. Repeat with the remaining butter, beating until the mixture thickens. Remove from the heat.

Melt all the butter and whisk into yolk mixture

small bowl

Microwave at 50% (Medium) stirring every 15 seconds

Hollandaise sauce

1¼ mins

Standing time: 1-2 mins

2 egg yolks (size 2)
30ml / 2tbls lemon juice or vinegar
15ml / 1tbls water
large pinch of salt
pinch of cayenne pepper
100g / 4oz butter, cut into pieces

MAKES ABOUT 150ml / ¼pt

1 Beat the egg yolks in a bowl with the lemon juice or vinegar, water, salt and cayenne pepper.
2 Place the butter in a jug and microwave at 100% (High) for about 45 seconds until melted.
3 Whisk the butter into the egg mixture with a wire whisk. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 15 seconds, then stir and check consistency. Microwave again for 15 second bursts until sauce resembles lightly whipped cream.
4 Let stand for 1-2 minutes, whisking several times during this time.

Microtips

Egg sauces can separate if overcooked. To prevent this happening, stir sauce frequently during cooking, particularly around edge of bowl, and remove sauce from cooker when slightly underdone. The final cooking can then be completed in standing time.

If the sauce is at the correct consistency when removed from the cooker, stand bowl in cold water to prevent further cooking.

Cooks Notes

Should the Hollandaise sauce start to separate, immediately stir in 15ml / 1tbls cold water to cool it down quickly.

If the sauce should separate, don't worry, it can be simply rectified: measure 10ml / 2tsp vinegar or lemon juice into a bowl and, while stirring vigorously with a wire whisk, add the separated sauce, little by little.

If the sauce is too thick, stir in 15ml / 1tbls warm water.

Microwaving meatloaves

From a substantial supper for friends and family to a TV dinner for two, meatloaves and microwaves can match any occasion with spice and style.

Minced beef is one of the most economical and versatile of meats to buy. There are plenty of possibilities for mince dishes, but perhaps the most useful and adaptable, and one well suited to the microwave cooker, is the traditional meatloaf.

Armed with the basic meatloaf mixture — which makes a succulent recipe in itself — you can make some of the really sumptuous variations. In fact, any combination of goodies can simply be rolled up inside the loaf, placed in the cooker and presented in a trice.

Savoury Rolled Meatloaf

Traditional meatloaf

16 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

700g / 1½lb minced beef
1 egg, beaten
50g / 2oz breadcrumbs
1 onion, finely chopped
1 celery stalk, finely chopped
15ml / 1tbls tomato ketchup
15ml / 1tbls Worcestershire sauce
salt and pepper

SERVES 4 - 6

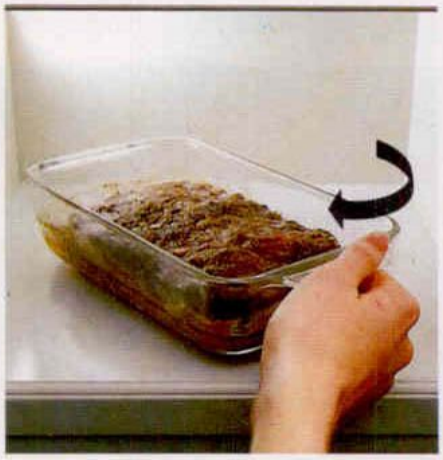
VARIATION

The traditional shape for a meat loaf is like a loaf of bread. To cook this shape successfully at 100% (High), rotate the dish after half the cooking time. If your microwave overcooks the corners, reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and double the cooking time.

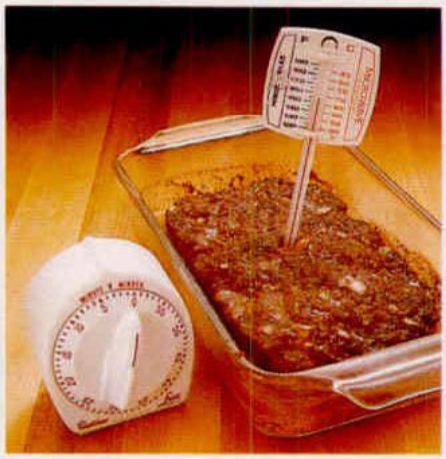
You can also guarantee even cooking by using the same recipe to make a meat ring. You can buy ring-shaped moulds specially designed for microwaving, or construct your own by placing a shallow glass in the centre of a 2.3L / 4pt dish.

How to microwave Traditional meatloaf

Combine *all the meatloaf ingredients in a bowl. Press the mixture into an 18 x 10cm / 7 x 4in loaf dish, spreading it evenly and smoothing down the top with the back of a knife.*



Microwave *the meatloaf, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 16-18 minutes, rotating the dish ½ turn after half the time, to encourage even cooking at both ends of the meatloaf.*



Test *the centre of the loaf. The meat should be firm and have lost its pink colour. Leave to stand, uncovered, for 5 minutes until the internal temperature reaches 60-65°C / 140-150°F.*

Variations on loaf dish shapes

Round *meatloaves may be pie- or ring-shaped. Use a fairly large pie dish, about 25cm / 10in. The ring shape works well in most cookers. The ring is deeper than a pie-shaped meatloaf, but energy penetrates from the centre for even cooking. If you don't have a ring-shaped dish, place a small glass, cup or bowl in the centre of a round dish to turn it into a ring shape.*

Individual *meatloaves should be packed into 175g / 6oz glass bowls or bowls of an even size. Arrange in a ring in the cooker. Rotate after half the cooking time.*

Savoury rolled meatloaf

26½ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

700g / 1½lb minced beef
2 eggs
50g / 2oz breadcrumbs
15ml / 1tbls Worcestershire sauce

FILLING
1 green pepper, chopped
1 red pepper, chopped
1 onion, chopped

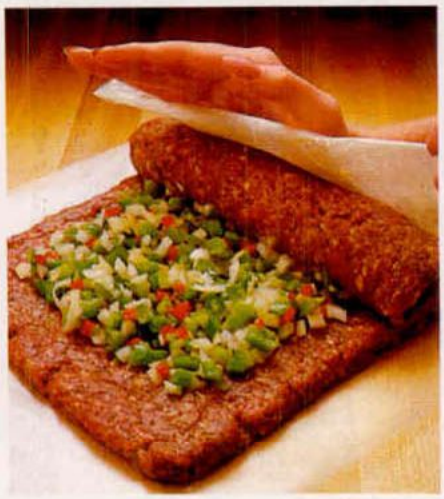
SERVES 4-6

1 Mix the meatloaf ingredients together. On greaseproof paper, pat into a rectangle 1cm / ½in thick.
2 Microwave the green and red peppers at 100% (High) for 1½ minutes. Sprinkle pepper and onions over the meat, leaving a 2.5cm / 1in border on all sides.
3 Roll up as shown (right), pressing the edges together to seal.
4 Place in a 22 x 11cm / 8½ x 4½in dish, seam down. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
5 Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 20-23 minutes (internal temperature: 60-65°C / 140-150°F). Rotate once during cooking. Let stand for 5 minutes.

VARIATIONS
It is not necessary to do the preliminary 1½ minutes of microwaving for the following vegetables before sprinkling them over the meat; otherwise follow the instructions in Step 2 of the method. Instead of the pepper and onion, substitute:

- 150g / 5oz chopped tomatoes 50g / 2oz chopped mushrooms and sliced black olives;
- 50g / 2oz chopped celery, 75g /3oz chopped leeks and 75g / 3oz grated Cheddar.

Rolling a meatloaf



Roll *the meatloaf starting at one short end. Lift the paper until the meat begins to roll tightly. Peel back the paper to keep it free, then continue rolling and peeling until rolled up.*

Asparagus ham loaf

30 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

700g / 1½lb minced beef
2 eggs
15g / ½oz dry breadcrumbs
15ml / 1tbls Worcestershire sauce
15ml / 1tbls milk
salt

FILLING
200g / 7½oz packet frozen asparagus spears
50g / 2oz ham, sliced
50g / 2oz Mozzarella cheese, sliced

SERVES 6-8

1 Cut a cross on one side of the bag of asparagus and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
2 Meanwhile, combine the meatloaf ingredients. On greaseproof paper, pat into a 23 x 33cm/9 x 13in rectangle, 1cm / ½in thick.
3 Top the meat with ham slices; then arrange the cheese and asparagus spears on top. Leave a 2.5cm / 1in border on all sides. Roll up as shown above. Place in a loaf dish, seam down. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.

Asparagus Ham Loaf

4 Reduce power to 50% (Medium). Microwave for 20 minutes, rotating the dish ½ turn halfway through the cooking time, until the meat is firm and has lost its pink colour (internal temperature: 60-65°C / 140-150°F). Let stand for 5 minutes before serving.

Freezer Notes

If buying minced beef in quantity, divide the beef into 450-700g / 1-1½lb packages. Form the meat into blocks and make a depression in the centre with a wooden spoon to give a ring shape for easy thawing.

Mini meatloaf

4 mins

Standing time: 2 mins

225g / 8oz minced beef
1 slice soft white bread, crumbled
30ml / 2tbls milk
15ml / 1tbls chopped onion
30ml / 2tbls tomato ketchup
5ml / 1tsp Worcestershire sauce
large pinch of garlic powder
salt and pepper
slice of green pepper (optional)

SERVES 2

1 Crumble the minced beef in a medium bowl. Using your fingers or a fork, mix in the crumbled bread, milk, onion, half the tomato ketchup, the Worcestershire sauce, garlic powder and seasoning to taste.
2 Shape the mixture into a small, rectangular loaf. Place in a 19×10cm / 7½×4in loaf dish. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes, rotating after half the time to ensure even cooking.

Mini Meatloaf

3 Brush with the remaining tomato ketchup. Top with the green pepper slice, if wished.
4 Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2½ minutes, or until internal temperature reaches 60-65°C / 140-150°F, rotating ½ turn after half the cooking time and removing drippings as necessary. Allow to stand, uncovered, for 2 minutes, until cooking is completed.

Curried meatloaf

15 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

700g / 1½lb minced beef
50g / 2oz quick cooking porridge oats
2 eggs
large pinch of salt
1.5ml / ¼tsp pepper
7.5ml / 1½tsp curry powder
1 small onion, chopped
1½ celery stalks, sliced
1 apple, peeled and grated
75g / 3oz raisins

SAUCE
50g / 2oz tomato ketchup
30ml / 2tbls brown sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp curry powder

SERVES 4 - 6

1 Using your fingers or a fork, mix together all the meatloaf ingredients except the raisins and using only half the grated apple, reserving the other half.
2 Press half the meat mixture into a loaf dish. Sprinkle with raisins and the remaining apple, leaving a 2.5cm / 1in border on all sides. Top with the remaining meat mixture, pressing the edges together to seal. Microwave at 100% (High) for 13-18 minutes. Drain off the meat cooking juices and use in the sauce.
3 Combine the sauce ingredients in a small bowl, mixing well. Pour over the meatloaf. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, until the meat is set or until the internal temperature reaches 60-65°C / 140-150°F. Leave to stand for 5 minutes to complete cooking before serving. Eat hot or cold with potatoes and a salad.

Fruit desserts

Make the most of fruits in season or from your freezer with this delicious selection of fruit desserts. Delectable, healthy and not too calorie-packed, all the family will enjoy these recipes.

Fruit desserts are refreshing, nutritious and low in calories. Because it is so quick, microwaving enhances the fresh flavour and texture of fruits and ensures that the goodness is not lost during cooking. Remember that they will continue to cook for a few minutes after they have been removed from the cooker. Take them out when they are just tender and slightly crisp to the bite.

You can use either fresh, frozen or canned fruits in the microwave. Fresh and frozen fruit needs little additional sugar, which means that the dishes are healthy and not too fattening.

Some fruits, like bananas, apples and pears, turn brown when peeled and sliced. In order to prevent this from happening, prepare them just before cooking, or sprinkle them with lemon juice to preserve their colour.

Red fruit compote

10 mins

Standing time: none

550g / 1¼lb fresh or frozen rhubarb, cut into 2.5cm / 1in pieces
2.5ml / ½tsp ground cinnamon
65ml / 2½fl oz water
225g / 8oz fresh strawberries, sliced
75g / 3oz caster sugar
5-6 drops of red food colouring (optional)

SERVES 6

1 In a 1.4l. / 2½pt bowl, combine the rhubarb, cinnamon and water, and cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.

2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 9-10 minutes, or until the rhubarb is tender, stirring 2 or 3 times during cooking.

3 Mash the rhubarb slightly. Stir in the strawberries, caster sugar and a few drops of red food colouring, if using.

4 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 1 minute, or until strawberries are heated through. Serve hot or chilled; if hot, serve with extra sugar to taste.

VARIATION

Sprinkle the compote with toasted flaked almonds before serving.

Apricot soufflé

12 mins

Standing time: none

400g / 14oz can apricot halves, chopped, with juice reserved
30ml / 2tbls cornflour
2.5ml / ½tsp grated lemon zest
1 egg yolk, beaten
3 egg whites

SERVES 8

VARIATION
This soufflé is very successful with canned peaches or pears. It is also delicious with pineapple cubes, and can be turned into an exotic treat with canned guavas.

How to microwave Apricot soufflé

Drain *apricot juice into a jug. Make up to 250ml / 9fl oz with cold water. Place the cornflour in a 1L / 1¾pt bowl and blend in the apricot juice. Stir in the chopped apricot halves and the grated lemon zest.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes, until thick and translucent. Blend a small amount of the mixture into the beaten egg yolk in a small bowl. Stir the egg yolk into the apricot mixture. Set aside.*

Beat *the egg whites until stiff peaks form. Gently fold into the apricot mixture until evenly combined. Pour the mixture into a 1.1L / 2pt round casserole or soufflé dish.*

Microwave *at 30% (Low) for 8-9 minutes, until centre is set, rotating the dish every 2-3 minutes during cooking. Serve immediately with pouring cream, if liked.*

Raspberry cobbler

7¼ mins

Standing time: none

350g / 12oz fresh or frozen raspberries
175g / 6oz sugar
15ml / 1tbls cornflour
100g / 4oz plain flour
7.5ml / 1½tsp baking powder
salt
40g / 1½oz butter or margarine
75ml / 3fl oz milk
3.5ml / ¾tsp ground cinnamon

SERVES 4

1 In a 850ml / 1½pt casserole, gently combine the raspberries, 100g / 4oz sugar and the cornflour. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes, or 5 minutes if using frozen raspberries, until the mixture is clear and thickened. Stir 2 or 3 times. Set aside.
2 In a medium-sized bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, salt and 25g / 1oz sugar. Rub 25g / 1oz butter into the flour. Add the milk and stir until the dough just clings together. Place on a floured surface and knead lightly until the dough is smooth. Roll out to a 20 × 23cm / 8 × 9in rectangle.
3 Place the remaining butter in a small bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for 20-30 seconds, or until melted. Brush over the dough and sprinkle with a mixture of the remaining sugar and cinnamon.
4 Cut the dough into 9×2.5cm / 1in strips. Roll up each strip, then arrange them around the outer edge of the raspberry mixture.
5 Microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes, or until the scone ring springs back when lightly pressed, rotating ¼ turn every minute. Serve hot.

Microtips

When sugar is used in dough or sprinkled on the top it should only be microwaved for a short time. Sugar becomes hot faster than the rest of the ingredients and it may burn if cooked for too long. So watch carefully when using it.

Peaches with soured cream

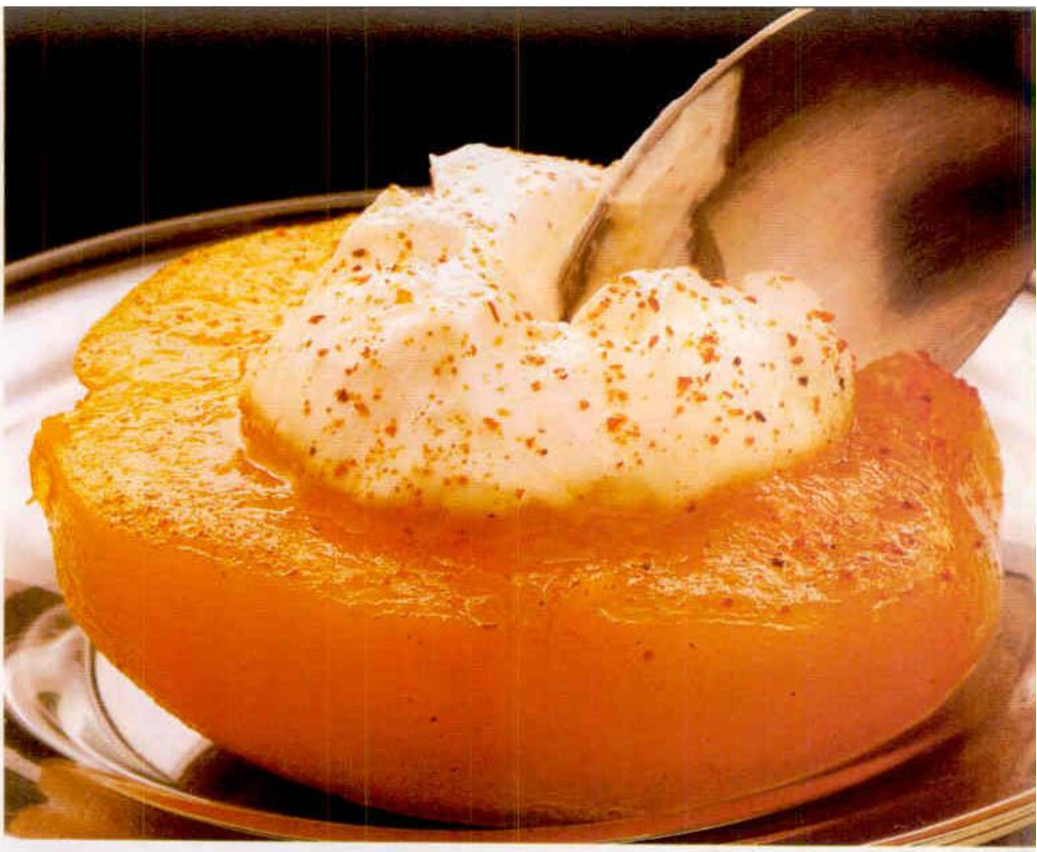
5 mins

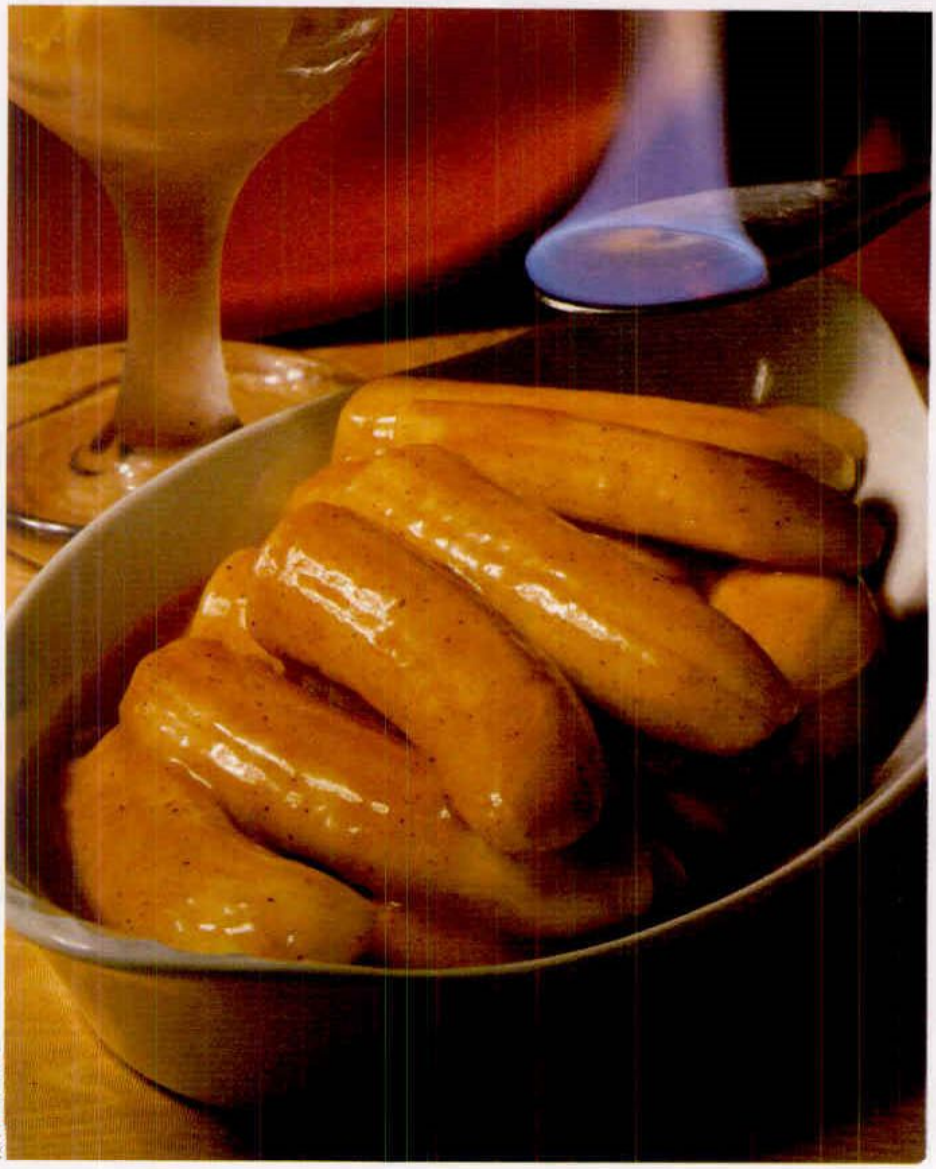
Standing time: none

825g / 1lb 13oz can peach halves, drained
60-90ml / 4-6tbls brown sugar
ground cinnamon for sprinkling
150ml / 5fl oz soured cream

SERVES 4-6

1 Arrange the peaches around the edge of a 23cm / 9in round baking dish. Put 2.5ml / ½tsp sugar in the centre of each and sprinkle with cinnamon.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 5-6 minutes, rotating the plate ¼ turn every minute. Cool.
3 Top peaches with soured cream and sprinkle with cinnamon.





RAY DUNS

Bananas royale

2½ mins

Standing time: none

3-4 very firm bananas
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
50g / 2oz dark soft brown sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground nutmeg
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground cinnamon
50ml / 2fl oz whipping cream
10ml / 2tsp rum or 5ml / 1tsp rum flavouring
ice cream, to serve

SERVES 6

1 Peel the bananas, slice in half lengthways, then crossways once.
2 Place the butter in a 1.7L / 3pt dish. Microwave at 100% (High) for 30 seconds, or until melted. Stir in the sugar, nutmeg, cinnamon and cream and microwave at 100% (High) for 1½ minutes, until sauce is slightly thickened.
3 Add the bananas, turning them in the sauce to coat. Microwave for 30 seconds, then stir in the rum. Serve with the ice cream.

VARIATION
Flambé the bananas: place rum in a dish and microwave at 100% (High) for 15-20 seconds until warm. Pour into a ladle, ignite and pour over bananas.

Blackcurrant tarts

6¼ mins

Standing time: none

CRUST
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
40g / 1½oz digestive biscuits, finely crushed

FILLING
30ml / 2tbls water
15ml / 1tbls cornflour
15g / ½oz caster sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground cinnamon
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice or lime juice
225g / 8oz fresh or frozen blackcurrants

MERINGUE
1 egg white
pinch of cream of tartar
5ml / 1tsp caster sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground cinnamon

SERVES 6

How to microwave Blackcurrant tarts

Melt *the butter in a small bowl at 100% (High) for 30-45 seconds. Add the crumbs and toss. Pat mixture evenly into the bases of 6 ramekins.*

Arrange *ramekins in a circle in the cooker. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute, until set. Combine all filling ingredients except blackcurrants*

Place *blackcurrants in a bowl, stir in the mixture. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes, stirring every minute to ensure even cooking.*

Spoon *the thickened blackcurrant mixture onto the prepared biscuit crust in the ramekins; smooth over with a knife. Set the dishes aside.*

Whisk *the egg white until frothy. Beat in the cream of tartar, sugar and cinnamon until stiff peaks form. Spoon meringue on top of tarts.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds, or until meringue is set, rotating cups after 30 seconds. Serve hot or chill before serving.*

Microwaving cauliflower

The dense, firm texture of cauliflower makes it an ideal vegetable for cooking in the microwave. Whole cauliflower or tiny florets remain deliciously crisp and full of flavour

Cauliflower cooked in the microwave retains more of its natural flavour, crispness and colour than when cooked conventionally.

When selecting a cauliflower, remember that the size of the head does not affect the quality. Choose clean flower heads with compact firm, white or slightly creamy-white florets.

When microwaving cauliflower, especially a whole head, the standing time is important for it allows the stems to tenderize without over-cooking the florets. If you separate the cauliflower into florets, halve or quarter the larger ones to make uniform pieces that will all cook to the same degree in the same amount of time.

Cheesy cauliflower

9¼ mins

Standing time: 3 mins

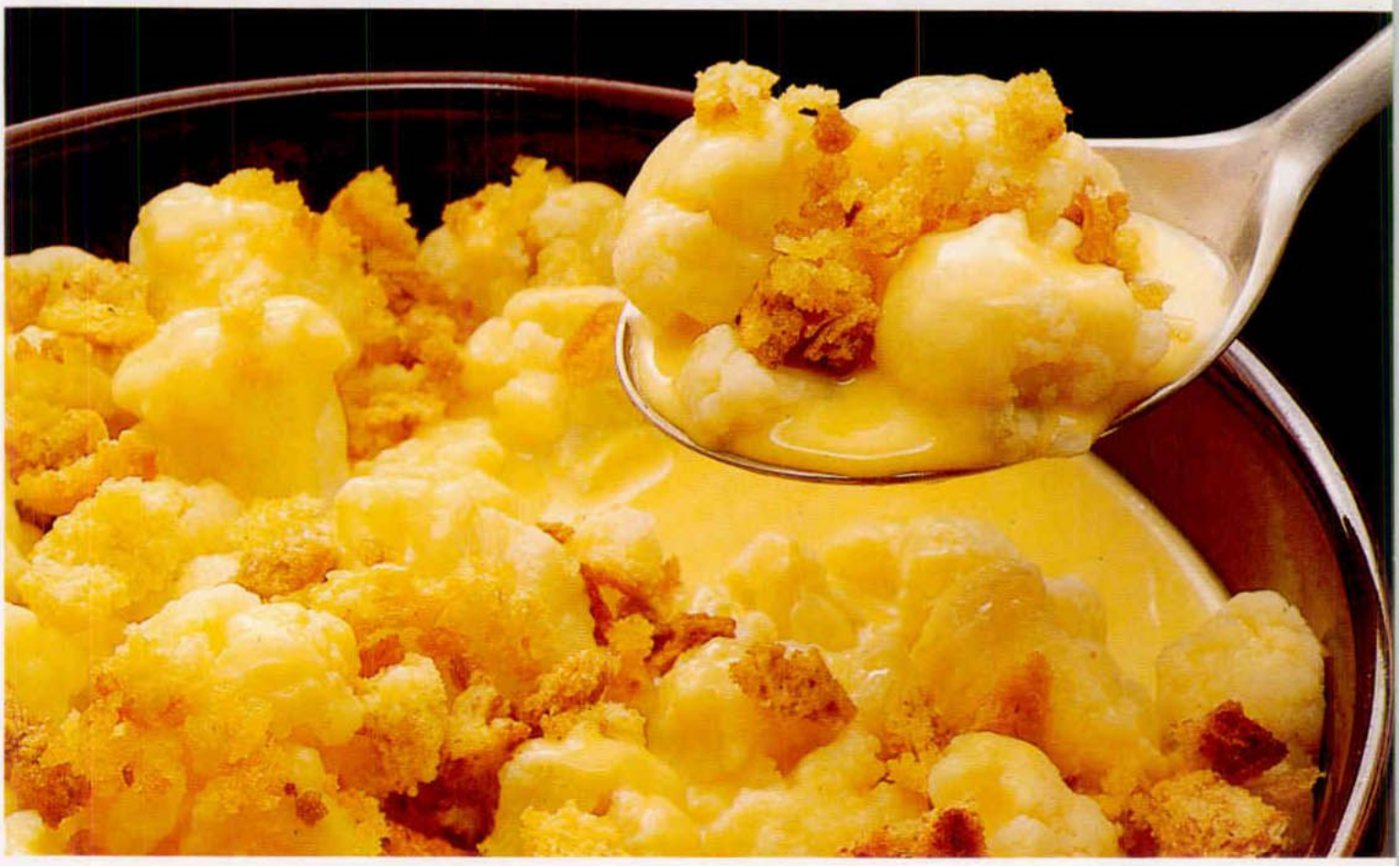
450g / 1lb cauliflower florets
100g / 4oz mushrooms, sliced
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
15g / ½oz plain flour
1.5ml / ¼tsp mustard powder
salt and pepper
125ml / 4fl oz milk
25g / 1oz Cheddar cheese, grated
75ml / 3fl oz soured cream

SERVES 4-6

1 Prepare, cook and stand the cauliflower, see chart, page 119.
2 While standing, combine the mushrooms and butter in a 1.1L / 2pt bowl. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes, stirring after 1 minute.
3 Blend in the flour and seasonings. Gradually stir in the milk and microwave at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes, or until thickened, stirring every minute.
4 Mix in the cheese and microwave at 100% (High) for 15 seconds to melt the cheese. Stir in the soured cream; pour over the hot cauliflower and serve.

VARIATION

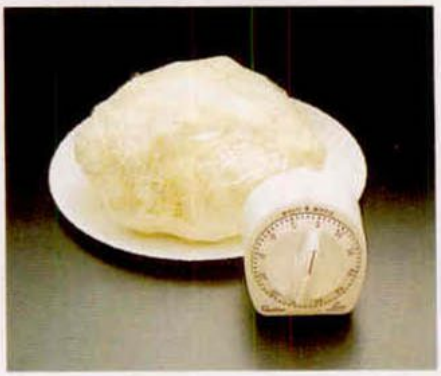
Top with crunchy breadcrumbs; in a bowl, combine 50g / 2oz fresh brown breadcrumbs and 25g / 1oz butter. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes, stirring once or twice, until brown.



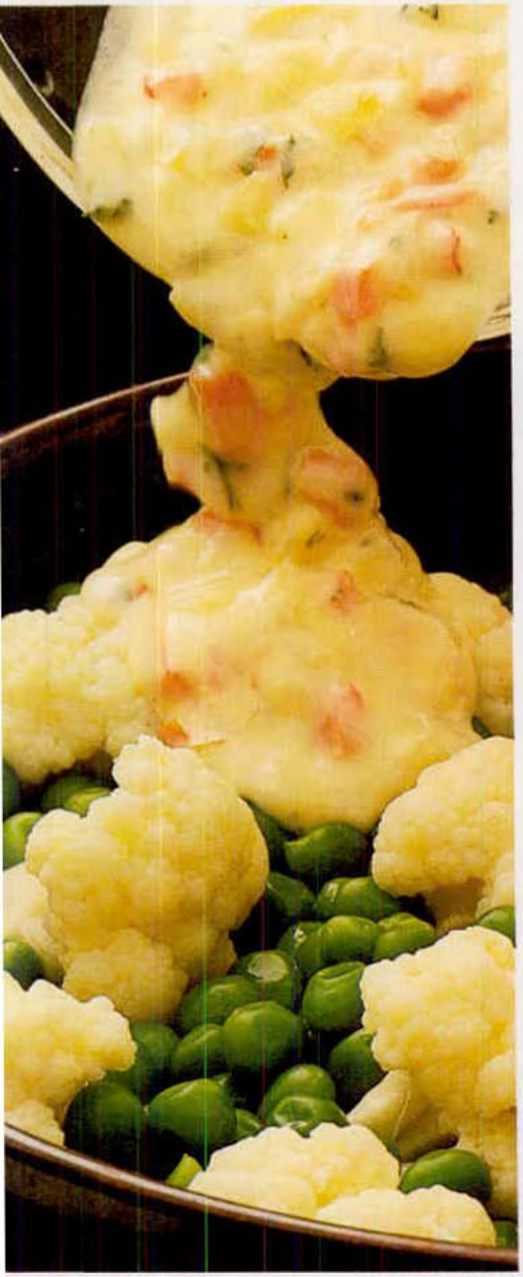
How to microwave whole cauliflower

Break *off outer leaves of a 450g / 1lb cauliflower and trim the stem to the base. Wash well in cold water; shake off excess.*

Wrap *in cling film and place on a plate, base upwards. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes. Turn cauliflower over.*



Microwave *at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes until stems are almost tender. Rotate the plate ½ turn every minute. Let stand for 3 minutes.*



Cauliflower and peas

10½ mins

Standing time: 2-3 mins

275g / 10oz cauliflower florets
100g / 4oz frozen peas
30ml / 2tbls water

SAUCE
1 onion, finely chopped
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
15g / ½oz plain flour
75ml / 3fl oz single cream
75ml / 3fl oz chicken stock
15ml / 1tbls finely chopped red pepper
5ml / 1tsp chopped parsley
salt and pepper

SERVES 4-6

1 In a 1.4L / 2½pt casserole, combine the cauliflower florets, peas and water. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 6-8 minutes, or until tender, stirring once. Stand, covered, for 2-3 minutes.
2 Place the onion and butter in a small bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until the onion is tender.
3 Stir in the flour, then the other sauce ingredients. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes, or until thickened, stirring every minute.
4 Drain the vegetables, pour over the sauce and stir. Serve at once.

Cauliflower and Peas

Cauliflower medley

20 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

100g / 4oz Browned butter (see Microtips, page 120)
1 large cauliflower, weighing about 700g / 1½lb
350g / 12oz new potatoes, each weighing about 50g / 2oz
350g / 12oz tiny carrots, scrubbed
1 onion, cut into 8 wedges
30ml / 2tbls water

SERVES 6-8

1 Prepare the Browned butter and set aside.
2 Place the cauliflower, base side up, at one end of a 35cm / 14in oval or 30cm / 12in round platter.
3 Remove a thin strip of peel from around the middle of each potato. Toss the potatoes, carrots and onion wedges in the Browned butter. Remove the vegetables with a slotted spoon and reserve the remaining butter.
4 Arrange the potatoes around the edge of the platter. Fan the carrots around the plate and place the onions in the centre. Sprinkle with water and cover.
5 Microwave at 100% (High) for 15-16 minutes, or until vegetables are just tender. Rotate the platter every 4 minutes and turn the cauliflower the right side up after half the cooking time.
6 Leave to stand for 5 minutes; pour over the remaining butter.

Cauliflower ring

13 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

1 tomato, seeded and cut into 6 wedges
450g / 1lb broccoli, cut into 5cm / 2in florets
450g / 1lb cauliflower florets
75ml / 3fl oz water
50g / 2oz butter or margarine
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
salt and pepper

SERVES 6-8

1 Arrange the tomato wedges, skin side down, on the bottom of a 23cm / 9in ring mould, 1.3L / 2¼pt capacity. Set aside.
2 Place the broccoli and cauliflower in a 2.3L / 4pt casserole. Add the water and cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 10-12 minutes, until just tender; stir every 4 minutes. Drain.
3 Arrange the cooked vegetables over the tomatoes in the mould; press to pack down firmly.
4 Place the butter in a small bowl, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds until melted. Blend in the lemon juice and season to taste. Pour over the vegetables. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes. Stand for 3 minutes, then invert on to a plate.

Microtips

Toasted almonds make a delicious garnish to serve over cauliflower or broccoli dishes. Place 15ml / 1tbls butter in a bowl, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute until melted. Stir in 40g / 1½oz blanched, slivered almonds. Microwave for 3½-4½ minutes, or until lightly browned, stirring once. Leave to stand for 5 minutes. Almonds will become darker as they stand. A sprinkling of toasted almonds also makes an excellent garnish for poultry and fish; particularly over poached trout.

Microwave times for cauliflower

TYPE	QUANTITY	MICROWAVE TIME AT 100% (HIGH)	PROCEDURE
Fresh cauliflower whole head	450g / 1lb	6-8 minutes	Cook as directed in the step-by-step instructions. Season to taste and stand for 3 minutes.
Fresh cauliflower florets	275g / 10oz	5-6 minutes	Place in a 1.4L / 2½pt covered casserole with 75ml / 3fl oz water. Stir once. Stand covered, for 2-3 minutes. Drain.
	450g / 1lb	6-7 minutes	As above.
Frozen cauliflower florets	225g / 8oz	5-6 minutes	Cook in a 1.1L / 2pt covered casserole with 60ml / 4tbls water. Stir once. Stand, covered, for 3 minutes. Drain and season to taste.
	450g / 1lb	8-9 minutes	Cook as above in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole.

Vegetable platter

17½ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

1 large artichoke
225g / 8oz Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
550g / 1¼lb cauliflower florets
225g / 8oz carrots, cut into 6.5 × .6cm / 2½ × ¼in strips
30ml / 2tbls water

CHEESE SAUCE
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
25g / 1oz plain flour
275ml / ½pt milk
5ml / 1tsp made mustard
salt and pepper
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, grated

SERVES 6-8

1 Cut off the artichoke stem close to the base so it will stand upright. Trim the outer leaves and slice off the top third.

2 Rinse in cold water. Shake off the excess and wrap the artichoke in cling film. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Remove the cling film and place the artichoke at one end of a platter.

3 Place the carrot strips in the centre of the platter. Arrange the Brussels sprouts and cauliflower florets around the carrots at the edge of the dish. Sprinkle over the water, cover the platter with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 10-11 minutes, or until just tender but still crisp, rotating platter twice. Leave to stand for 5 minutes.

4 Place the butter in a 575ml / 1pt bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for 30 seconds, or until melted. Blend in the flour, milk, mustard and salt and pepper to taste. Cook at 100% (High) for 3 minutes, or until thickened, stirring every minute. Stir in the cheese and microwave for 1 minute until melted. Pour over the vegetables and serve at once.

Cauliflower and pimiento

13 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

100g / 4oz button mushrooms
2 courgettes, cut into 6.5 × .6cm / 2½ × ¼in strips
450g / 1lb cauliflower florets
1 carrot, cut into 6.5 × .6cm / 2½ × ¼in strips
30ml / 2tbls water
strips of canned pimiento
Browned butter (see below)

SERVES 6-8

1 Arrange the mushrooms and courgettes in the centre of a 30-35.5cm / 12-14in round plate.

2 Arrange the cauliflower and carrot strips around the outside, alternating the colours and types of vegetables. Sprinkle with water and cover.

3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 8-9 minutes, or until tender but still crisp, rotating plate twice during cooking. To test for doneness peel back the cling film and pierce with a fork. Vegetables should feel soft and pierce easily. Leave to stand for 5 minutes.

4 Garnish with pimiento strips. Prepare Browned butter; see Microtips (below) and serve with the vegetables.

Microtips

Browned butter: *To prepare, put 100g / 4oz butter in a microwave-safe bowl. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5-6 minutes or until melted and golden brown, stirring every 3 minutes. Skim off the foam. If liked, add 5ml / 1tsp lemon juice.*

Vegetable arrangement: *The secret of success when microwaving several vegetables with different cooking times is to arrange them in the following way, so they cook evenly. Place the longer-cooking vegetable around the edge of the platter then make a second ring of vegetables with medium-cooking times, inside these. Place the quick-cooking ones in the centre where they receive less microwave energy.*

Chicken pieces

Chicken pieces are cheap to buy and convenient to serve. Using your microwave, you can prepare succulent, tasty meals in almost no time and they can be served straight from the dish.

When you cook chicken pieces in the microwave, the skin does not become crisp and brown. Although this does not affect the flavour, the pale skin of chicken looks more appetising if it is coated in a sauce containing colourful ingredients or brushed with a glaze before cooking. Microwaving chicken pieces ensures that they remain tender and moist. A sauce adds flavour and prevents the delicate chicken flesh from drying out. Except for sauces containing cream, most recipes for chicken in a sauce can be microwaved at 100% (High), thus reducing the cooking time.

Since chicken portions are rarely of uniform size, it is important to arrange them in the dish so that the thickest parts are pointing outwards. Be sure to rearrange awkwardly-shaped pieces at least once during the cooking time.

Chicken cacciatore

25 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

1kg / 2¼lb chicken pieces
1 onion, chopped

SAUCE
150ml / ¼pt dry white wine
225g / 8oz can tomatoes
60ml / 4tbls tomato purée
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 bay leaf
2.5ml / ½tsp dried oregano or basil
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried thyme

SERVES 4-6

1 Combine all the sauce ingredients in a measuring jug. Stir well.
2 Arrange the chicken, with the thickest parts to the outside, in a 3L / 5pt bowl or casserole, together with the chopped onion. Add the sauce.
3 Cover the bowl with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 10 minutes. Stir and rearrange the chicken portions so that the least-cooked parts are to the outside of the bowl. Re-cover and microwave for a further 15 minutes or until the chicken is tender and no longer pink near the bone.
4 Leave to stand, covered, for 5 minutes before serving with rice.

VARIATION
Add 100g / 4oz sliced button mushrooms to the chicken when rearranging.

RAY DUNS

RAY DUNS

Chicken in cream sauce

29 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

1 onion, thinly sliced
1 celery stalk, thinly sliced
25g / 1oz butter
25g / 1oz flour
150ml /¼pt chicken stock
150ml / ¼pt single cream
15ml / 1tbls finely chopped fresh parsley or 5ml / 1tsp dried
1 bay leaf
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried marjoram
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
pepper
1kg / 2¼lb chicken pieces
chopped fresh parsley, to garnish

SERVES 4-6

1 In a 2.5-2.8L / 4½-5pt bowl, microwave the onion and celery in the butter at 100% (High) for 4 minutes, stirring once during the time. Stir in the flour, stock, cream, herbs and seasoning.
2 Add the chicken pieces, coat them in the sauce, then arrange them so that the meatiest parts are to the outside of the bowl. Cover the bowl with cling film rolled back at one edge.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and cook for 20 minutes, until tender. Rearrange the chicken, placing the least-cooked parts to the outside of the dish halfway through cooking.
4 Stir well, cover and leave to stand for 5 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley before serving.

How to microwave Chicken in cream sauce

Combine *the sauce and the chicken in a large bowl and mix well. Make sure that the meatiest parts of the chicken pieces are closest to the outside of the bowl and all are covered in sauce.*

Cover *and microwave as directed for the first part of the cooking time. Stir the sauce and rearrange the chicken with the least-cooked parts to the outside of the dish.*

Microwave *for the remaining time until the chicken is tender and no longer pink near the bone. Leave to stand, covered, for 5 minutes to blend the flavours and finish cooking.*

Swiss cheese chicken

15 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

4 boneless chicken breasts (about 175g / 6oz each)

SAUCE
15g / ½oz butter
15g / ½oz plain flour
150ml / ¼pt milk
65ml / 2½fl oz chicken stock
salt and pepper
65ml / 2½fl oz single cream
100g / 4oz Emmental cheese, grated

SERVES 4

1 Combine the sauce ingredients except the cheese in a bowl. Mix well, then microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes until the mixture thickens, whisking 2 or 3 times during the cooking time. Stir in the Emmental cheese until melted, and set aside.
2 Arrange the chicken breasts in a shallow dish, with the meatiest parts to the outside. Cover loosely with a piece of absorbent paper.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Rearrange and microwave for a further 4 minutes.
4 Coat the chicken breasts with the sauce and microwave at 100% (High) for a further 2-3 minutes, until the chicken is tender and the sauce is hot. Cover and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Microtips

Chicken cooked in the microwave will be tender and juicy and needs no prior browning. However, if you prefer, you can brown the chicken pieces conventionally in a frying-pan before continuing in the microwave cooker.

Be sure to rearrange the pieces from time to time to ensure that they cook evenly. If you want the chicken to be meltingly tender, you can microwave it at 30% (Low). This produces extremely succulent chicken, but you must allow at least twice as long for the cooking time.

Lemon-glazed chicken

15 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

4 chicken breasts, on the bone, skinned (about 175g / 6oz each)
few drops of gravy browning

LEMON GLAZE
15ml / 1tbls water
15ml / 1tbls fresh lemon juice
1.5ml / ¼tsp finely grated lemon zest
1.5ml / ¼tsp French mustard
salt
1 garlic clove, crushed (optional)
chopped fresh parsley.

SERVES 4

1 Rub the top of each portion with 1 or 2 drops of gravy browning.
2 Arrange the chicken breasts, bone side up, on a roasting rack or in a shallow dish.
3 Combine all the lemon glaze ingredients, stir well and brush half over the chicken. Cover loosely with a piece of absorbent paper. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
4 Turn the chicken over and brush with the remaining glaze mixture. Microwave for a further 10-15 minutes, rotating once during cooking, until the flesh is tender. Cover and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Coq au vin

26 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

100g / 4oz bacon rashers, chopped
25g / 1oz plain flour
150ml / ¼pt dry red wine
150ml / ¼pt water
30ml / 2tbls chopped parsley
1 bay leaf
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried thyme
½ chicken stock cube
1 garlic clove, crushed
salt and pepper
100g / 4oz mushrooms, sliced
1 large onion, thinly sliced
1kg / 2¼lb chicken pieces

SERVES 4-6

Lemon-glazed Chicken

1 Place the bacon in a 2.8L / 5pt dish. Cover with absorbent paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.
2 Blend in the flour, then the liquids, herbs, stock cube, garlic and seasonings. Add the mushrooms, onion and chicken.
3 Cover with cling film and microwave at 100% (High) for 15 minutes. Stir the sauce, rearranging the least-cooked parts of the chicken to the outside of the dish.
4 Microwave, uncovered, for a further 8-11 minutes or until the chicken is tender and no longer pink near the bone.
5 Stir, cover and leave to stand for 5 minutes before serving.

Chicken with vegetables

27 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

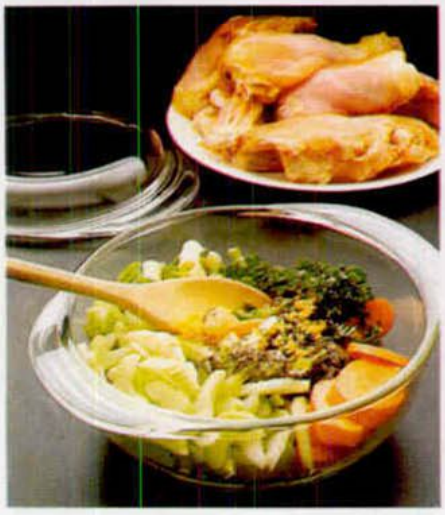
225g /8oz carrots, thinly sliced
2 celery stalks, thinly sliced
3 spring onions, finely sliced
15ml / 1tbls chopped fresh parsley
30ml / 2tbls dry white wine
30ml / 2tbls lemon juice
2.5ml / ½tsp finely grated lemon zest
2.5ml / ½tsp dried basil
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried thyme
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
pepper
1kg / 2¼lb chicken portions

SERVES 4-6

VARIATION

You can make this more spring-like by using fresh or frozen peas or green beans rather than the wintery root vegetables. If you are using peas, omit the dried basil and thyme and substitute a little dried mint, or sprinkle some finely chopped fresh mint over the top of the chicken just before serving, to give a lovely, just-from-the-garden flavour. Garnish the green beans with fresh dill leaves or a little dillweed.

How to microwave Chicken with vegetables



Combine *all the ingredients except the chicken in a 1L / 1¾pt bowl. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes.*

Arrange *the chicken portions in a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in shallow dish with the meatiest parts to the outside. Spoon the vegetables and liquid over them. Cover with cling film.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 15 minutes, rearranging and basting every 5 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 8-10 minutes. Stand for 5 minutes.*

Barbecued drumsticks

16 mins

Standing time: 2 mins

8 chicken drumsticks (about 700g / 1½lb total weight)
25g / 1oz butter
1 small onion, very finely chopped
2.5ml / ½tsp mustard powder
5ml / 1tsp Worcestershire sauce
15ml / 1tbls cider vinegar
90ml / 6tbls tomato ketchup
45ml / 3tbls brown sugar

SERVES 4

1 Arrange the drumsticks, bone ends to centre, in a shallow round or rectangular dish. Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 4 minutes. Set aside.
2 Combine the butter, onion, mustard and Worcestershire sauce in a measuring jug. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes. Add the vinegar, tomato ketchup and sugar and microwave at 100% (High) for a further minute.
3 Turn the partially cooked chicken drumsticks over and coat each with 15ml / 1tbls of the sauce.

Barbecued Drumsticks

4 Cook, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 4 minutes. Turn the drumsticks over, coat with the remaining sauce and continue to microwave for a further 5 minutes or until the chicken is tender and no longer pink near the bone. Cover loosely with foil and leave to stand for 2 minutes.

Arroz con pollo

31 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

1 onion, finely chopped
50g / 2oz butter
350g / 12oz long-grain rice
2.5ml / ½tsp turmeric
5ml / 1tsp salt
2.5ml / ½tsp dried mixed herbs
1 chicken stock cube
625ml / 22fl oz boiling water
450g / 1lb chicken breasts, boned and skinned
1 garlic clove, crushed (optional)
45ml / 3tbls lemon juice
2 tomatoes, chopped
1 small green pepper, chopped

SERVES 4-6

1 Place the onion and butter in a 3L / 5pt bowl. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes.
2 Add the rice, turmeric, salt, herbs, stock cube and boiling water. Stir, then cover with cling film and microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and continue cooking for 12 minutes, stirring halfway through the cooking time. Leave to stand, covered, for 5 minutes.
3 Cut the chicken breasts into strips about 6 × 1cm / 2½ × ½in and place in a bowl with garlic, if using, and lemon juice. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 6-7 minutes or until the chicken is no longer pink, stirring twice.
4 Add the cooked chicken to the rice together with the tomatoes and green pepper. Stir to mix evenly. Cover the bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for a final 5 minutes until all the ingredients are piping hot. Remove the bowl from the cooker and leave it to stand, covered, for 3 minutes to complete the cooking and develop the flavour.

Arroz con Pollo

Meals-in-a-mug

Make the most of your microwave — especially when you're cooking for one — to produce lots of tasty, timesaving and wholesome meals-in-a-mug.

Whether it's for breakfast, lunch or dinner, or simply a quick snack you're after, why not explore the possibilities of easy-to-prepare, one dish cooking?

There are many tempting variations to make from these four basic meal-in-a-mug themes. Make the most of those leftovers, such as boiled, roast or mashed potatoes or pasta. Add a little minced cooked meat, moistened with a little leftover gravy, and stir in a pinch of curry or chilli powder to taste before cooking. Top, if liked, with grated cheese or fresh herbs.

Chocolate pudding

2 mins

Standing time: none

125ml / 4fl oz milk
25g / 1oz unsweetened chocolate, broken into pieces
10ml / 2tsp cornflour
15ml / 1tbls sugar

SERVES 1

1 Place the milk and chocolate in a large microwave-safe mug or small bowl.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-1½ minutes, or until hot but not boiling. Stir to melt the chocolate.
3 Combine the cornflour and the sugar in a small bowl. Blend it into the milk and chocolate. Microwave for 1-1¼ minutes, or until the mixture just begins to boil. Stir halfway through and at the end of cooking. Watch closely to prevent boiling over.

VARIATION

Cinnamon nut: Add a good pinch of cinnamon to the cornflour mixture and cook as instructed. Sprinkle with chopped nuts before serving.

Breakfast eggs

1¼ mins

Standing time: 2 mins

15ml / 1tbls butter or margarine
1 or 2 eggs
15ml / 1tbls milk or water
salt and pepper
1 rasher cooked bacon, crumbled

SERVES 1

1 Place the butter in a microwave-safe mug. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-45 seconds.
2 Add the egg(s), milk, salt and pepper and stir with a fork.
3 Microwave 1 egg at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds; 2 eggs at 1-1½ minutes, or until the egg(s) begin to set, stirring gently once.
4 Remove the egg(s) from the cooker while soft and moist. Leave to stand for about 2 minutes. Sprinkle with bacon.

Chicken and tomato soup

2 mins

Standing time: none

175ml / 6fl oz milk
½ chicken stock cube, crumbled
2.5ml / ½tsp cornflour
25g / 1oz cooked chicken, diced
1 small tomato, seeded and diced
2.5ml / ½tsp chopped fresh parsley

SERVES 1

1 Place all ingredients except parsley in a microwave-safe mug.
2 Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, or until boiling, stirring once. Stir in the chopped parsley and serve.

VARIATION
Substitute cooked ham or turkey leftovers for the chopped chicken.

Meat and potato surprise

2 mins

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz cooked potato
100g / 4oz cooked beef, pork or lamb, minced or chopped
15ml / 1tbls gravy, stock or Worcestershire sauce
30ml / 2tbls tomato ketchup
spring onion, chopped
salt and pepper

SERVES 1

1 Slice or mash the potato and put into a microwave-safe mug.
2 Moisten the meat with the gravy and 15ml / 1tbls of the ketchup. Stir in the onion and seasoning.
3 Spoon the mixture over the potato. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes. Top with the remaining ketchup.

Courgette bake

7 mins

Standing time: 2 mins

5ml / 1tsp olive oil
2 spring onions, finely chopped
30ml / 2tbls diced green pepper
pinch of dried oregano
pinch of dried basil or marjoram
1 courgette, diced
15ml / 1tbls tomato purée
15ml / 1tbls water
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, grated
pepper
5ml / 1tsp grated Parmesan cheese

SERVES 1

How to microwave Courgette bake

Place *the oil, onions, pepper and herbs in a microwave-safe mug or bowl. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Add the courgette to the mixture and microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.*

Stir *in the tomato purée, water, half the cheese and pepper to taste. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute until cheese melts.*

Sprinkle *the remaining Cheddar cheese and the Parmesan cheese on top. Cover and leave to stand for 2 minutes before serving.*

Creamy ham and spaghetti

2 mins

Standing time: 1 min

100g / 4oz leftover cooked spaghetti
50g / 2oz ham, diced
2 tomatoes, skinned and diced
4 button mushrooms, chopped
65ml / 2½fl oz single cream
salt and pepper
2.5ml / ½tsp chopped fresh parsley

SERVES 1

1 Place all the ingredients except the parsley in a microwave-safe mug or bowl and mix well.
2 Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes.
3 Leave to stand for 1 minute. Stir well, then sprinkle with the chopped parsley and serve.

Microtips

To cook 2 Courgette bakes at the same time, double the ingredients and use 2 microwave-safe mugs. Also increase the times given: microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes each time in Step 2 and for 1½ minutes in Step 3. Follow instructions as given in Step 4.

Batch cooking: pork casseroles

It is always handy to have food in the freezer which can be transformed into complete meals in minutes. Here, a basic pork casserole is used to make four different dishes.

Pork is a rich meat which can be frozen and thawed without losing any of its flavour. The basic casserole takes only 30 minutes to cook. It can then be divided into four containers and frozen until needed. Each container takes only minutes to thaw in the microwave and can then be used as the basis for one of four exciting dishes.

The Old-fashioned Casserole has extra flavour added with fresh ginger and vegetables — strong flavours such as ginger are best added to dishes after thawing as they can taste musty if stored in the freezer. Add tomatoes and peppers to the mix for a Spanish touch; chop suey and bamboo shoots for a Chinese meal, or sauerkraut for a German dish.

Pork Espagnole

GRANT SYMON

Pork casserole basic recipe

30 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

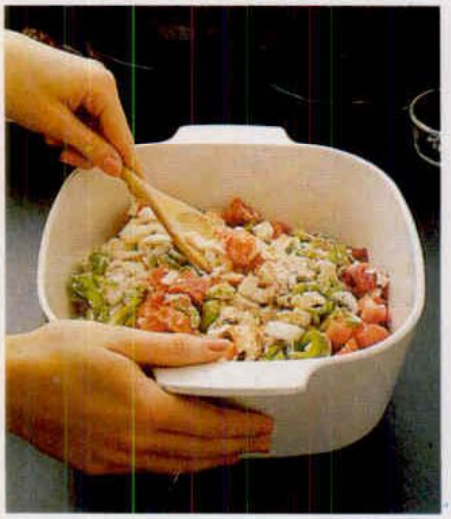
1.8kg / 4lb boneless pork, cut into 1cm / ½in cubes
2 onions, chopped
2 celery stalks, thinly sliced
275ml / ½pt chicken stock
50g / 2oz plain flour
5ml / 1tsp salt
5ml / 1tsp Worcestershire sauce
1 bay leaf
1.5ml / ¼tsp cayenne pepper (optional)

MAKES 4 CONTAINERS OF MIX

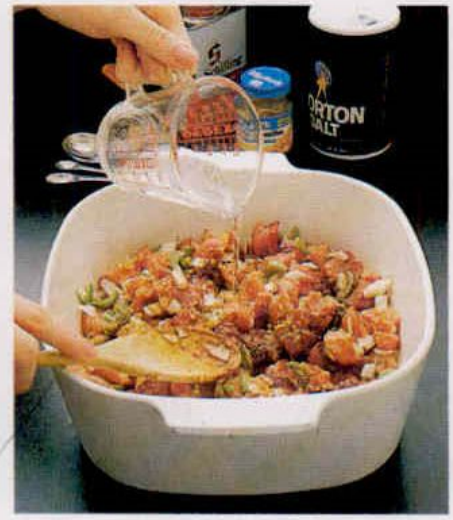
Freezer Notes

Thawing the frozen pork mix takes between 9-12 minutes (see steps below). Then, to reheat, microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes. Leave to stand for 5 minutes before serving with rice or potatoes.

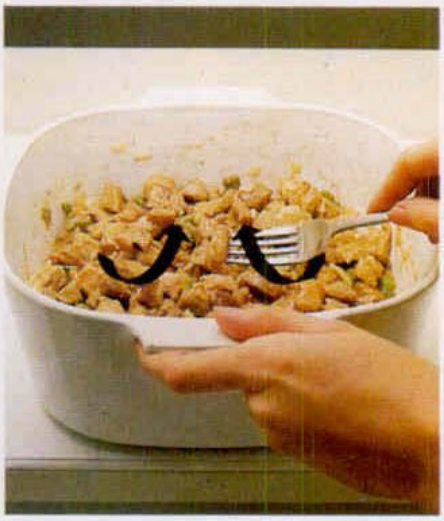
How to microwave basic Pork casserole



Toss *the meat and vegetables with the chicken stock and flour in a 5.1l. / 9pt casserole. Make sure that they are well combined and that the flour is completely dissolved.*

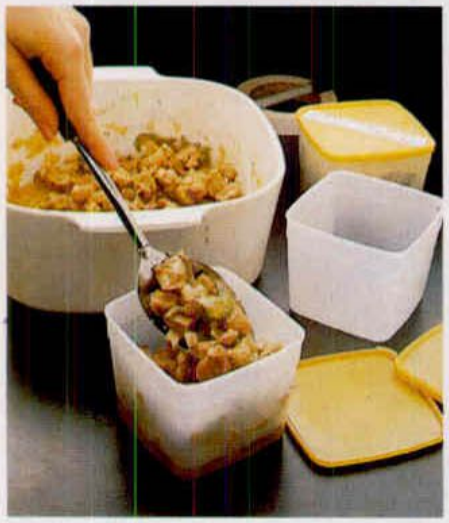


Add *the remaining ingredients. Cover with a lid or cling film. Microwave at 100% (High) for 10 minutes. Stir to rearrange food; re-cover. Reduce power to 50% (Medium).*



Microwave *for 20 minutes, until pork is fork tender, stirring twice during the cooking time. Leave to stand for 5 minutes. Remove the bay leaf before freezing.*

How to freeze and thaw basic Pork casserole



To freeze: *divide the mix into quarters. Package each quarter in a plastic freezer box or in heavy-duty freezer bags. Seal, label and freeze for up to 9 months.*

To thaw: *Empty one container of the pork mix into a 1.1l. / 2pt casserole. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 9-12 minutes or until the mix is thoroughly thawed.*

Break *the meat apart with a fork after the first 5 minutes of microwaving. Then stir the pork after a further 3 minutes to ensure even distribution of heat.*

Pork chop suey

9 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

50ml / 2fl oz water or dry sherry
50ml / 2fl oz soy sauce
15ml / 1tbls cornflour
2 celery stalks, sliced
15ml / 1tbls butter or margarine
1 container of Pork casserole, thawed
450g / 1lb can Chinese vegetables, drained
225g / 8oz can bamboo shoots, drained
100g / 4oz spring onions, chopped
100g / 4oz chow mein noodles

SERVES 4

1 In a small bowl, combine the water or sherry, soy sauce and cornflour. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute; stir once.
2 In a 2.3L / 4pt casserole, microwave celery and butter at 100% (High) for 2 minutes or until tender-crisp. Stir in thickened sauce and remaining ingredients except chow mein noodles.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 6 minutes; stir once. Leave to stand for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, cook the noodles conventionally. Serve the chop suey on the noodles.

Pork and sauerkraut

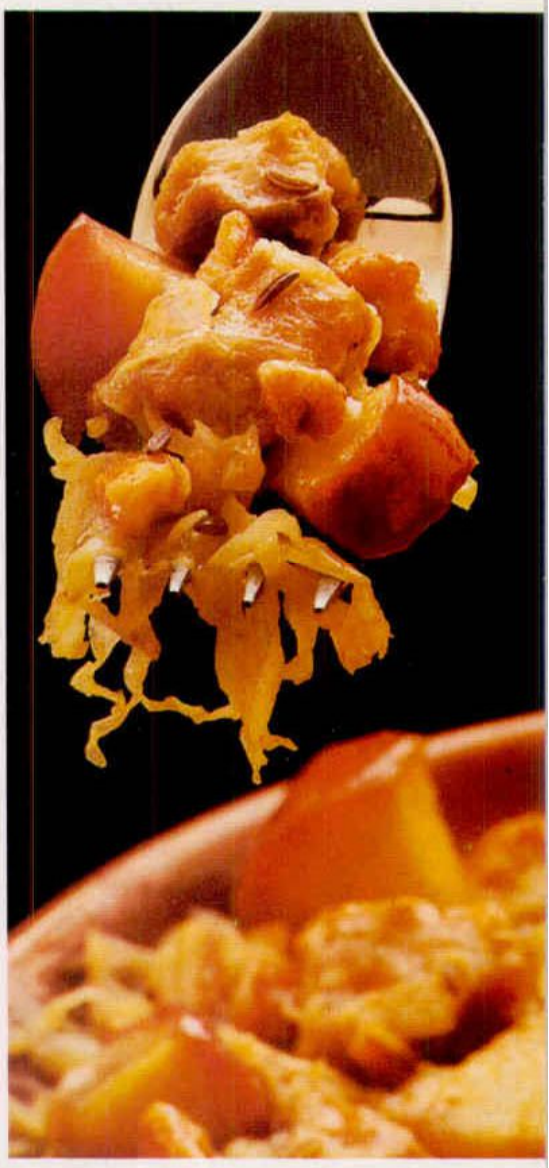
8 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

2 dessert apples, chopped
15ml / 1tbls butter or margarine
15ml / 1tbls plain flour
1 container of Pork casserole, thawed
350g / 12oz can sauerkraut, rinsed and well drained
50g / 2oz dark soft brown sugar
2.5ml / ½tsp caraway seeds
50g / 2oz chopped walnuts

SERVES 4

1 In a 2.3L / 4pt casserole, combine the apples and butter. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes. Put half in a bowl.
2 Stir the flour into the remaining mixture, then add the pork, sauerkraut, half the soft brown sugar and the caraway seeds. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, stirring once.
3 Combine the reserved apples and remaining brown sugar and the walnuts. Sprinkle over the pork. Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 1 minute. Leave to stand for 5 minutes.



Right: *Pork and Sauerkraut*
Below: *Pork Chop Suey*

RAY DUNS

Old-fashioned pork casserole

8 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

1 onion, peeled and chopped
225g / 8oz carrots, peeled and cut into 2.5cm / 1in matchsticks
2.5cm / 1in fresh ginger, grated
50g / 2oz butter
10ml / 2tsp plain flour
200g / 7oz can sweetcorn
1 container of Pork casserole, thawed
salt
25ml / 1fl oz gin

SERVES 4

1 In a 2.3L / 4pt casserole, combine the onion, carrots, ginger and butter. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes.
2 Stir the flour into the casserole, then add the sweetcorn, the pork casserole and the salt. Mix the ingredients, then pour the gin over the contents of the casserole.
3 Cover; microwave at 100% (High) for 6 minutes or until heated through, stirring after half the cooking time. Remove from the cooker and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Pork espagnole

9 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

30ml / 2tbls olive oil
1 garlic clove, finely crushed
1 green pepper, sliced
1 yellow pepper, sliced
450g / 1lb tomatoes, peeled, and cut into segments
2.5ml / ½tsp dried thyme
2.5ml / ½tsp dried sage
1 container of Pork casserole, thawed
150ml / ¼pt red wine
60ml / 2½fl oz tomato purée

SAUCE
15ml / 1tbls anchovy paste or 4 anchovies, chopped
10ml / 2tsp olive oil
15ml / 1tbls capers, drained
15ml / 1tbls red wine vinegar
1 garlic clove, crushed.

SERVES 4

1 In a 2.3L / 4pt casserole, combine the oil, garlic and peppers. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes and microwave for 1 minute.
2 Remove the casserole from the cooker and stir in the thyme and sage. Add the pork mixture, wine and tomato purée. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, stirring after half the cooking time.
3 Meanwhile, mash the anchovy paste and oil with the capers. Stir in the vinegar and garlic.
4 Stir into the casserole and microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute. Leave to stand for 5 minutes.

How to test when food is cooked

Most techniques for testing whether microwaved food is done are the same as the ones you use for conventionally cooked dishes, with a few exceptions which can be mastered in seconds.

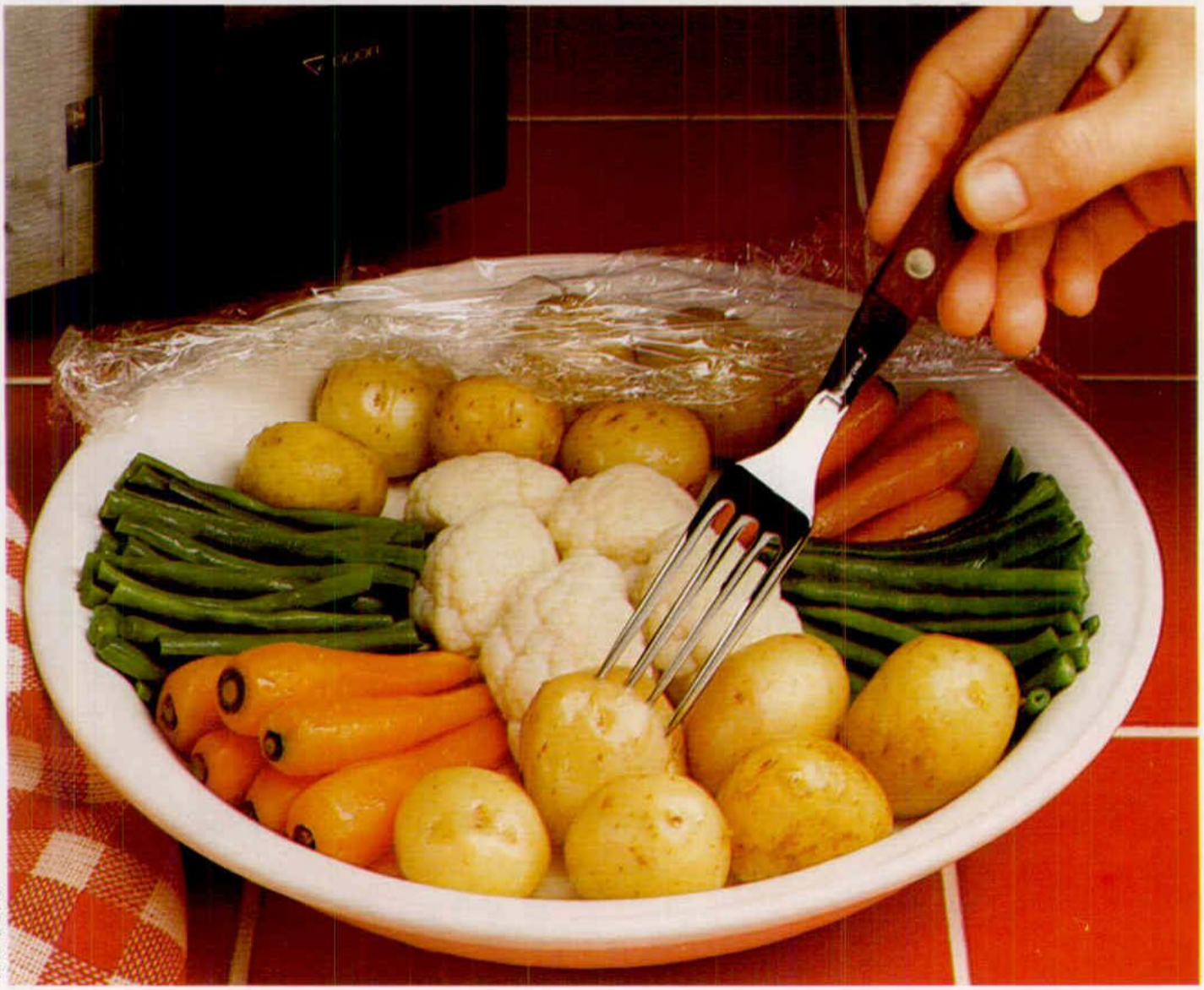
The appearance of some microwaved foods may be different from their conventionally cooked counterparts. Cakes baked in your microwave, for example, will look paler than you are accustomed to, even though they are perfectly cooked. Most tests for doneness, however, are the same as those used for conventional cooking; the few exceptions are shown here. Apart from the colour check, testing techniques for cakes are the same.

A microwaved cake is 'done' when it shrinks away from the sides of the dish, and a cocktail stick inserted into the centre will come out clean.

As a general rule, meat is done if it feels tender when a fork is inserted. To test for doneness on larger cuts, a microwave probe or thermometer is needed, this is inserted into the central, meatiest part of the joint, avoiding fat and bone as much as possible. During 10 minutes standing time after the meat is removed from the microwave, the internal temperature will rise 10°C / 50°F.

Vegetables are ready when they can be pierced with a fork. Only test after standing time as the vegetables tenderize further during this period. Test the denser parts, such as the stalks of cauliflower or broccoli as these vegetables take longer to cook.

To test if vegetables are done, fold back cling film carefully and pierce.



RAY DUNS

When to remove food

Removing certain foods from the cooker before they are completely done is one of the hardest things to learn about microwaving, but it is important because food continues to cook after it is taken out.

Standing time is part of the microwaving process and is especially important for foods which need time to tenderize the centre without overcooking the edges. A further advantage is that while food is standing you are saving energy: with this method of cooking the heat is inside the food rather than coming from an outside source as with a conventional oven, which explains why the food can go on cooking out of the microwave.

Some foods must be taken out of the microwave while they still look partially cooked. Delicate-textured shellfish, for instance, can easily overcook and become tough and dry, so, to enjoy them at their best, remove from the microwave before they are fully done and allow to stand to finish cooking.

If the food isn't done to your taste at the end of the standing time, you can always put it back in the microwave for a little longer, but there is no remedy for overcooking, Remember to wait until the end of the specified standing time, before taste-testing.

The secret of successful microwave cooking really lies in getting to know your microwave cooker; this is as essential as getting to know your conventional oven. Each microwave cooker varies slightly in speed and evenness of cooking and you need to understand your cooker before you can calculate cooking times accurately.

Right: *probe switches off the cooker at the required temperature.*

How to test cakes

A wooden cocktail stick *inserted in the centre of a cooked cake comes out clean. Do not put the stick into the moist spots which form on the surface.*

A cake *shrinks away from the sides of the dish when done; the top will not turn brown like a cake cooked in a conventional oven.*

Alternatively, *test sponge cakes by pressing gently with fingertips. If the cake is cooked it will spring back when pressed lightly.*

How to test meat, poultry and fish

Meat *is done if it feels tender when a fork is inserted. Less tender cuts split at the fibres when they are cooked: standing will tenderize them as well as completing the cooking.*

Chicken *is ready when the drumsticks move freely at the joint and are soft when pinched. You can also tell whether the chicken is cooked if the juices from the cavity run clear.*

Fish *flakes easily with a fork when it is done. The centre is slightly translucent but it finishes cooking on standing. Fish toughens and dries out if it is allowed to overcook.*

Microwave utensils for testing food

Probes and microwave thermometers *register the internal temperature of meat. Insert them as you would a conventional meat thermometer with point in centre of the meat. A probe turns the cooker off automatically when the meat reaches a pre-set temperature. It is not accurate for poultry because the fat becomes hot rapidly and a probe may turn the cooker off before the meat is fully done.*

Use *conventional meat or sugar thermometers to check temperatures outside the cooker, but only use microwave thermometers during cooking as mercury affects microwaves.*

Traditional Sunday lunch

Relax and at the same time present an impressive display with this traditional Sunday lunch. The microwave countdown provides a detailed plan for all the courses.

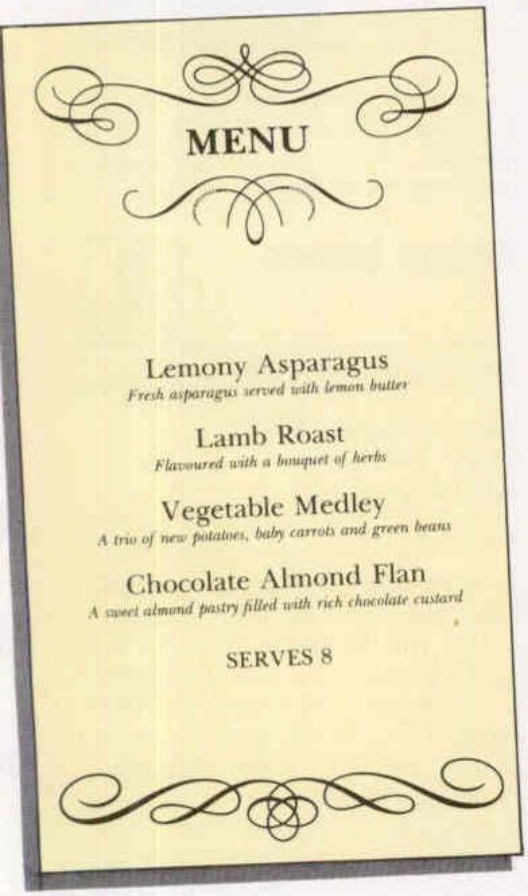
A Sunday lunch for eight is a lovely idea, but often involves a lot of hard work. It generally takes a good slice out of the weekend to prepare and cook, leaving you feeling exhausted and ready for another weekend. With the microwave, however, the idea can actually become reality in half the time it takes with a conventional oven.

Roast lamb is a traditional Sunday dish, which can be cooked to perfection in the microwave. The best method of cooking it is to keep the power on 50% (Medium) for the majority of the time. This will ensure that the meat stays tender and succulent. Taken out of the microwave to complete its required standing time, it will keep warm for an additional 30 minutes if kept covered. The heat continues to spread by conduction inside the meat for some time, unlike conventionally cooked roasts, which rapidly lose their heat once out of the oven.

Fresh green asparagus is an excellent appetizer for a mid-day meal and the tangy lemon sauce enhances its flavour. New potatoes, served with plenty of butter and teamed with baby carrots and beans, can all be cooked ahead, kept covered then briefly reheated just before serving. Warmed up in the microwave, they will taste freshly cooked. Then arrange them separately or with the meat. Finish off with a tempting Chocolate Almond Flan.

The timing for this meal depends on how well cooked you like your lamb. If you prefer it well-done begin the roast about 1¾ hours before serving time; with rare meat, allow about 1¼ hours.

CHRIS CROFTON


MENU
Lemony Asparagus
Fresh asparagus served with lemon butter
Lamb Roast
Flavoured with a bouquet of herbs
Vegetable Medley
A trio of new potatoes, baby carrots and green beans
Chocolate Almond Flan
A sweet almond pastry filled with rich chocolate custard
SERVES 8

Countdown

The day before
Microwave the flan case. Cool and store in an airtight container. Make the custard filling and cover closely with cling film to prevent a skin forming. Store in the refrigerator until needed.

Early on the day
Prepare the vegetables. Microwave the potatoes and set aside. Microwave the carrots and set aside. Microwave the beans and set aside. Arrange all three vegetables on a large platter and cover with cling film. Set aside in the refrigerator or cool place until required.

1¼-1¾ hours before serving
Prepare and microwave the lamb until internal temperature reaches desired reading. Cover the lamb loosely with foil and leave to stand to finish cooking for 10 minutes, then cover tightly with the foil; it will hold its heat for 40 minutes.

While the lamb is cooking
Assemble and finish the Chocolate Almond Flan. Prepare the lemon butter for serving with the fresh asparagus appetizer.

20 minutes before the meal
Microwave the asparagus as directed. Set aside, covered. Microwave the lemon butter sauce and pour over the cooked asparagus when ready to eat.

Before the main course
Reheat the vegetable platter at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes. While the lamb is being carved, quickly microwave the juices and cornflour to make gravy. Serve with the lamb.

Beat the chilled custard for the Chocolate Almond Flan until smooth, then spoon it into the pastry case.

RAY DUNS

Lemony asparagus

17 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

1kg / 2¼lb fresh asparagus spears
125ml / 4fl oz hot water
100g / 4oz butter
30ml / 2tbls lemon juice
salt and pepper
lemon slices, to garnish

SERVES 8

1 Cut off the tough ends of the asparagus. Place the asparagus in a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in dish with the spears pointing inwards. Add the water and cover with cling film rolled back at one edge to allow steam to escape.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 16-18 minutes or until tender, rearranging the spears and turning the dish 2-3 times during cooking. Leave to stand for 5 minutes, then drain.
3 Place the butter and lemon juice in a small bowl. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-1½ minutes or until the butter is melted. Add salt and pepper to taste, stir, then pour over the asparagus spears and serve at once, garnished with lemon slices. Alternatively, serve the butter separately.

Baby carrots

12 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

900g / 2lb whole baby carrots
60ml / 4tbls water
salt and pepper

SERVES 8

1 Scrub or peel the carrots.
2 Arrange the carrots in a 1.1L / 2pt casserole dish and add the water.
3 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 12-15 minutes, stirring twice during the cooking time.
4 Leave to stand, covered, for 3 minutes, then drain thoroughly before serving. Season to taste.

Green beans

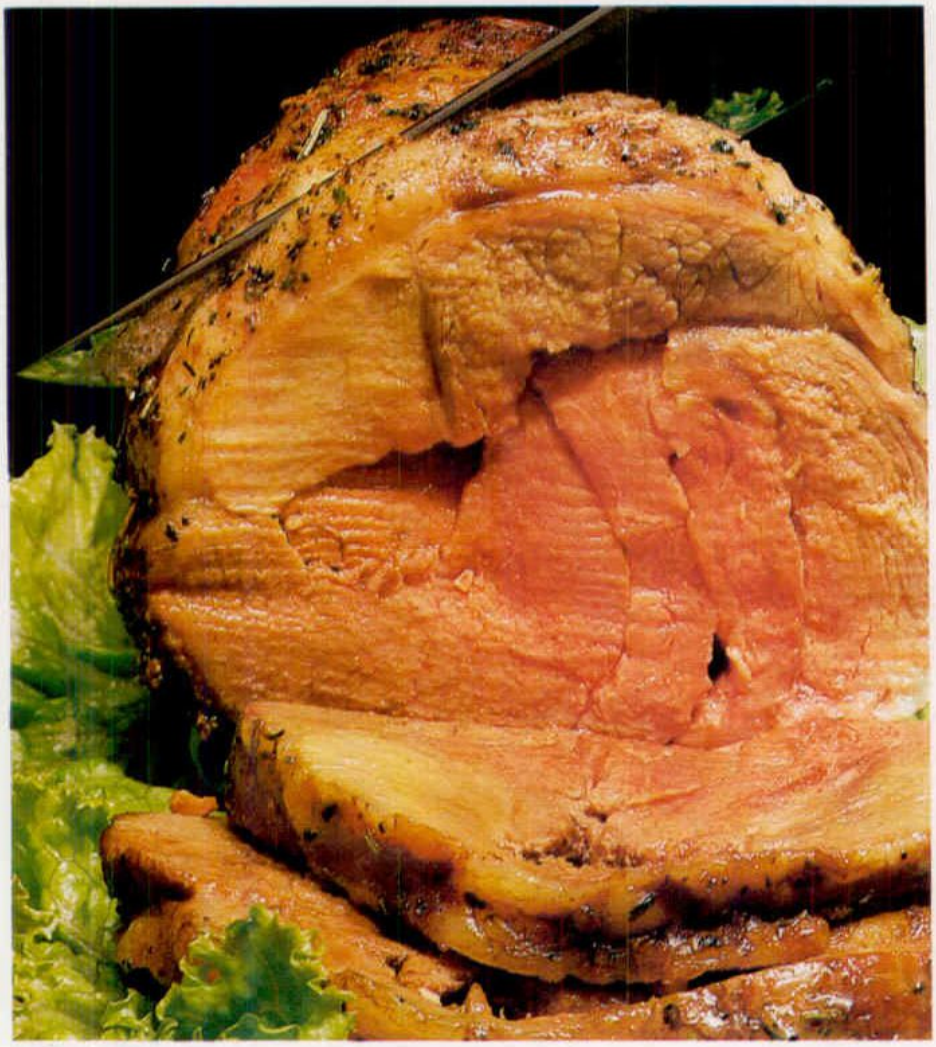
15 mins

Standing time: 2-3 mins

900g / 2lb green beans
60ml / 4tbls water
salt and pepper

SERVES 8

1 Trim the beans and cut into approximately 5cm / 2in lengths.
2 Put the beans in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole dish and add the water.
3 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 15-18 minutes, until tender but still crisp. Stir once during cooking.
4 Leave to stand, still covered, for 2-3 minutes, then drain thoroughly before serving. Season to taste.



Microtips

You start with an advantage when you microwave lamb: lamb is a tender meat. However, factors such as size, how well done you like your lamb, and whether the meat is at room temperature or has come from the refrigerator all affect timing. Shield thinner areas of meat and/or bone with small pieces of smooth foil, shiny side innermost.

If you use a microwave thermometer or a probe it can be left in while the meat cooks. Alternatively, the meat can be taken from the cooker, tested with a conventional oven thermometer, then returned without the thermometer, should further cooking be necessary. Do not put a conventional thermometer in the microwave as the mercury affects the microwaves.

Microwaving the meat at 50% (Medium) gives a much more succulent joint and prevents fat spitting.

To enjoy hot, leftover, roast meat that has been in the refrigerator without cooking it further, simply slice, cover with cling film and microwave at 100% (High); 225g / 8oz will take about 3 minutes.

Lamb roast

45 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

1.8kg / 4lb boneless rolled leg of lamb
2 garlic cloves, cut in thin slivers
2.5ml / ½tsp dried thyme
2.5ml / ½tsp dried rosemary
2.5ml / ½tsp dried chervil
salt and pepper

GRAVY
5ml / 1tsp cornflour
about 150ml / ¼pt stock or water

SERVES 8

1 Cut small slits in the lamb and insert a garlic sliver into each.
2 Combine the remaining ingredients and rub all over the joint.
3 Place the roast, fat side down, on a roasting rack and insert a meat thermometer or a probe into the thickest part. Calculate the total roasting time from the chart below. Microwave the lamb at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for the remaining part of first half of cooking time.
4 Turn the joint over. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for the second half of the cooking time or until it reaches the required temperature. Leave to stand, covered loosely with foil, for 10 minutes.
6 Stir the cornflour into the meat juice and stir in the stock. Bring to the boil and cook for 1-2 minutes.

Microwaving times for roast lamb

Desired doneness	Time per 450g / 1lb	Standing times	Removal Temperature
Rare	10-12 mins	10 mins	54°C / 129°F
Medium	13-15 mins	10 mins	64°C / 147°F
Well done	16-18 mins	10 mins	70°C / 158°F

New potatoes

15 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

1.1kg / 2½lb small new potatoes
275ml / ½pt hot water
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
butter, to serve
watercress sprigs, to garnish

SERVES 8

1 Wash the potatoes thoroughly, then peel a narrow strip from the centre of each, or pierce.
2 Pour the hot water into a large casserole and add the salt. Stir well until dissolved. Add the potatoes and cover.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for about 15 minutes or until the potatoes are tender. Leave to stand for at least 10 minutes, drain and add a knob of butter to serve. Garnish with watercress sprigs before serving.

CHRIS CROFTON

Chocolate almond flan

11½ mins

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz caster sugar
75g / 3oz butter, plus extra for greasing
2 egg yolks
150g / 5oz plain flour
50g / 2oz ground almonds

FILLING
30ml / 2tbls cornflour
15ml / 1tbls plain flour
500ml / 18fl oz milk
10ml / 2tsp instant coffee powder or granules
175g / 6oz plain chocolate, broken into pieces
2 eggs
30ml / 2tbls orange-flavoured liqueur

TO FINISH
150ml / ¼pt double cream
25g / 1oz flaked almonds, toasted

SERVES 8

1 To make the pastry, cream the sugar and butter until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg yolks one at a time, then gradually work in the flour and ground almonds to form a soft, smooth dough. Knead lightly on a floured surface.
2 Lightly grease a 23cm / 9in round flan dish, then roll out the pastry to fit the dish. Chill for half an hour. Prick very thoroughly to help crisp the pastry case and stop it from puffing up. Microwave at 100% (High) for about 5 minutes until the pastry begins to colour; allow to cool.
3 Blend the cornflour, flour, milk and instant coffee together in a 2L / 3½pt bowl. Add chocolate.
4 Microwave at 100% (High) for 5½-6 minutes or until thick, stirring vigorously every 2 minutes.
5 Lightly beat the eggs in a separate bowl and mix in 90ml / 6tbls of the hot custard. Blend, then stir into the remaining custard.
6 Microwave at 100% (High) for about 1 minute until thick. Beat in the liqueur. Cover and chill.
7 About 1½ hours before serving, beat the custard until smooth and spoon into the pastry case.
8 Whip the cream until thick then pipe rosettes over the custard. Decorate the rosettes with toasted almonds, then chill for at least 1 hour before serving.

Quick and easy biscuits

Delicious, crisp, rich-tasting biscuits are quick and simple to cook in a microwave. In the time it takes to heat a conventional oven your batch for tea can be baked, decorated and ready to serve.

Microwaving biscuits, although it needs to be done in batches, can be a really practical, energy-saving success story, provided you follow a few ground rules.

In order to keep their shape, biscuits in a microwave need to be made with a very stiff dough.

Bear in mind, too, that, unlike conventionally baked biscuits, these will not brown, so they are best decorated — try dusting with sugar, adding chocolate for colour, or including nuts or cherries to add colour and texture.

Microwave biscuits at 50% (Medium) for 2-4 minutes for 6. For fewer biscuits, allow 20-30 seconds for each one. Microwave the biscuits on paper and let them stand on this before cooling.

Vanilla Biscuits and variations

GRANT SYMON

Vanilla biscuits

8 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

This basic recipe provides the base for all the variations (right).

100g / 4oz butter
75g / 3oz soft light brown sugar
175g / 6oz plain flour
pinch of salt
10ml / 2tsp water
5ml / 1tsp vanilla flavouring

MAKES 24

VARIATIONS

Chocolate and almond Add 25g / 1oz cocoa powder to the mixture with the flour. Press a split almond into the centre of each biscuit. Sprinkle with caster sugar after microwaving and before standing.

Crunchy nut Press 50g / 2oz chopped nuts onto the biscuits before cooking.

Cherry garlands Divide the dough into 24, then each piece into 6 evenly sized balls. Arrange into 24 rings of 6 balls each. Cook 6 at a time for 2 minutes, microwaving at 50% (Medium). Using 1 cherry cut in 6 slices for each biscuit, place a cherry slice in between the balls. Sprinkle with caster sugar, then microwave at 50% (Medium) for a further 1 minute.

Chocolate chip Add 75g / 3oz chocolate chips to the mixture before cooking.

Rainbow biscuits Top the cooked biscuits with a glacé icing made using 100g / 4oz sifted icing sugar and 30ml / 2tbls water. Sprinkle with hundreds and thousands.

Chocolate vanilla rings Prepare half of the mixture with 15g / ½oz cocoa powder. Assemble and cook as for cherry garlands, alternating plain and chocolate mixtures.

How to microwave vanilla biscuits

Beat *the butter and soft brown sugar together in a large bowl until the mixture is light and fluffy. If the butter is hard, cut it into small pieces and use a warmed bowl for mixing.*

Sift *the flour and salt together into the bowl with the creamed mixture. Add the water and vanilla flavouring, and fold together until the dough is of a smooth and stiff consistency.*

Roll *the dough into 24 small balls. Place a piece of greased greaseproof paper on a microwave baking tray. Arrange 6 balls at a time in a circle on the paper, spaced out.*

Flatten *the tops of the biscuits using a fork, then microwave at 50% (Medium) for 2-3 minutes. Check after 2 minutes — the biscuits should be just pale golden in the centre.*

Keep *the biscuits on the paper and leave to stand for 5 minutes. Slide the paper onto a work surface if dish is needed for next batch.) Transfer to a wire rack to cool.*

Decorate *the biscuits in one of the ways described in the variations. The biscuits are very pale, so add chocolate, cherries or nuts to add colour and texture to the cooked biscuits.*

RAY DUNS

Clockwise above: *Cherry Garlands, Chocolate and Almond, Rainbow Biscuits, Crunchy Nut, Chocolate Chip.*
Right: *Peanut Butter Biscuits.*

Peanut butter biscuits

10 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

100g / 4oz butter
100g / 4oz peanut butter
225g / 8oz soft light brown sugar
1 egg
200g / 7oz plain flour
pinch of salt
1.5ml / ¼tsp baking powder
2.5ml / ½tsp vanilla flavouring

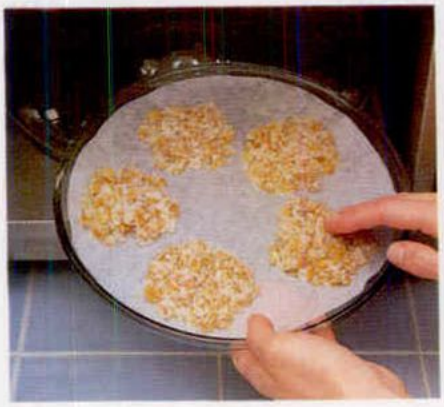
MAKES 30

1 Cream the butter, peanut butter and sugar together. Mix in the remaining ingredients.
2 Form the mixture into 30 small balls. Cover a microwave baking tray with greased greaseproof paper. Arrange 6 balls on the paper in a circle. Flatten the tops with a fork.
3 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 2-3 minutes.
4 Let the biscuits stand for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool. Repeat the procedure with the remaining mixture. Cool then store in an airtight tin.

How to microwave Coconut crunchies

Whisk *the egg whites with an electric or balloon whisk until stiff. Using a metal spoon, fold in the sugar, coconut and cornflakes.*

Line *a microwave baking tray or large plate with lightly greased greaseproof paper and arrange 6 spoonfuls of the mixture in a circle around the plate.*



Microwave *at 50% (Medium) for 3 minutes, leave to stand for 3 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool while cooking the remaining mixture.*

Break *the chocolate into pieces and melt in the microwave at 50% (Medium) for 2 minutes. Drizzle the chocolate onto the cooled biscuits.*

Coconut crunchies

5 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

2 egg whites
150g / 5oz caster sugar
75g / 3oz desiccated coconut
50g / 2oz crushed cornflakes
25g / 1oz plain chocolate

MAKES 18

1 Whisk the egg whites until stiff, then fold in the sugar, coconut and cornflakes.
2 Place a piece of lightly greased greaseproof paper on a microwave baking tray or large plate. Arrange 6 spoonfuls of the mixture in a circle on the paper.
3 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 3 minutes, until dry to the touch and just golden in the centre. Allow to stand for 3 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool. Repeat the procedure with the remaining mixture.
4 Break the chocolate into pieces and put in a small bowl. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 2 minutes, then drizzle the chocolate from a spoon or piping bag onto the cooled biscuits.

VARIATION
You can replace the crushed cornflakes with any storecupboard cereal of your choice.

RAY DUNS

Microwaving whole fish

For delicious, succulent fish, cooking by microwave is an absolute winner. Fish is flaky and moist every time, provided you just follow the simple secrets of timing.

Fish is a delicate food to prepare and adapts extremely well to microwaving. Microwaved fish is flaky and moist and its full flavour really comes into its own. Since fish has no tough tissues, it cooks very quickly, so you can prepare a meal for several people in almost no time at all.

Always cook fish in a covered dish so that all the steam and moisture will be retained. Only cook it until the flesh flakes easily with a fork and leave it to stand for a few minutes after cooking so that the thicker centre part is cooked through.

Almost any kind of whole fish can be substituted for another in a recipe. As long as you follow the golden rule and do not overcook the fish, you will have perfect, moist results every time.

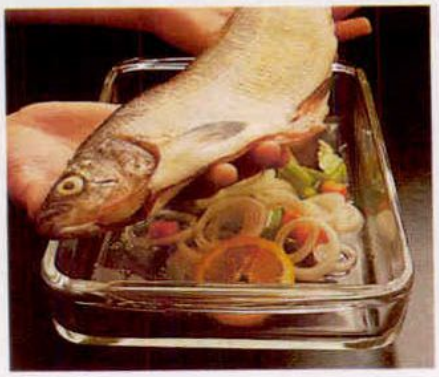
If you are preparing an entire meal in your microwave, always try to cook the fish last. Fish does not reheat as well as other foods and may easily become overdone during reheating. If you do need to reheat it, cover the dish to prevent dehydration.

Crab-stuffed Mullet

JOHN HESELTINE

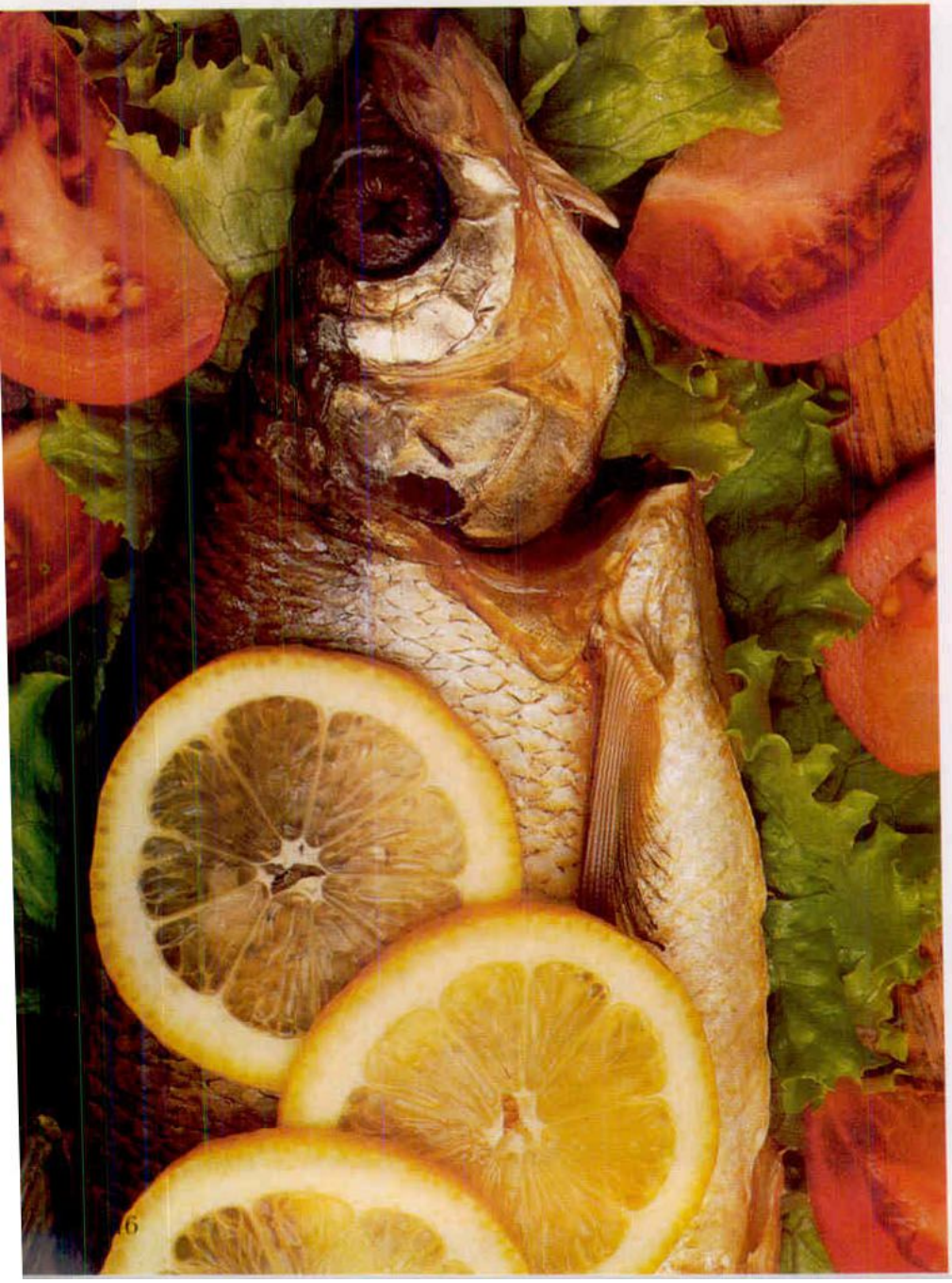
How to microwave — poach fish

Combine *the vegetables, lemon slices, herbs, seasoning and water in a large, shallow dish. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes.*



Arrange *the whole cleaned fish on top of the poaching ingredients. Cover tightly with cling film, rolled back at one edge to form a steam vent during microwaving.*

Microwave *the fish at 100% (High) for 4-6 minutes per 450g / 1lb or until the flesh flakes easily when tested with a fork, rotating the dish after half the cooking time.*



Poached fish

12 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

If preferred, use several small fish such as herring or mackerel, in place of one large one.

1 carrot, sliced
1 small onion, thinly sliced
1 celery stalk, sliced
3 lemon slices
1 bay leaf
10ml / 2tsp chopped fresh parsley
2 white peppercorns
large pinch of salt
150ml / 5fl oz water
1 whole fish, 450-900g / 1-2lb, cleaned

SERVES 4-8

1 Combine all the ingredients except the fish in a large, shallow dish. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes.
2 Lay the fish on top of the poaching ingredients in the dish and cover again.
3 Microwave at 100% (High), allowing 4-6 minutes per 450g / 1lb, or until the fish flakes easily with a fork and the flesh becomes opaque. Rotate the dish after half the cooking time. Leave to stand for 5 minutes before serving.
4 Serve the poached fish on a bed of lettuce and garnish with tomato wedges and lemon slices.

Crab-stuffed mullet

11 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

4 red or grey mullet, 175-225g / 6-8oz each, cleaned and scaled
2 tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped
1 celery stalk, chopped
½ green pepper, chopped
1 small onion, finely chopped
15ml / 1tbls chopped parsley
75g / 3oz mild Cheddar cheese, grated
180g / 6½oz can crabmeat, drained
5ml / 1tsp chilli sauce
5ml / 1tsp lemon juice
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground coriander pepper

SERVES 4

1 Combine the tomatoes, celery, green pepper, onion and parsley in a casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until tender, stirring after half the cooking time. Drain.
2 Stir in all the remaining ingredients except the fish. Spoon the mixture into cavity of each fish.
3 Arrange the fish in a large, shallow dish, cover with cling film and microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes, until the flesh flakes easily with a fork. Rotate the dish ½ turn every 2 minutes. Leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Microtips

Microwave a whole fish until it just begins to flake when tested with a fork. Do not overcook.

Broccoli-stuffed trout

5½ mins

Standing time: 3 mins

1 trout, about 175g / 6oz, cleaned
75g / 3oz broccoli, chopped
2 spring onions, finely chopped
15ml /1tbls butter or margarine
15ml / 1tbls chopped or flaked almonds
salt and pepper
2.5ml / ½tsp lemon juice
1 lemon slice cut into 3 pieces and a red pepper strip, to garnish (optional)

SERVES 1

1 Combine the broccoli, onions and butter in a casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes, or until tender. Mix in the almonds; season.
2 Place the trout in a shallow dish. Spoon three-quarters of the broccoli mixture into the cavity of the trout. Arrange the remaining mixture around the fish. Sprinkle the trout with lemon juice.
3 Cover the dish with cling film and microwave at 100% (High) for 4-6 minutes, or until the fish flakes easily with a fork, rotating the dish once during cooking. Let stand for 3 minutes.
4 Garnish with the lemon and red pepper strip, if using, and serve.

Broccoli-stuffed trout for two. Double the ingredients. Prepare as above, but microwave the broccoli and onion for 2-3 minutes and the trout for 6-8 minutes, rotating dish ½ turn every 2 minutes.

Freezer Notes

This dish can be made with frozen trout and frozen broccoli. Place the fish in a shallow dish, cover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 1-1½ minutes, or until thawed, turning over halfway. Rinse in cold water until the cavity is no longer icy. Pat dry with absorbent paper, then use as above.

Microwave the broccoli at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes, or until thawed. Stir, then use as above.

Stuffed trout

8 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

4 fresh trout, each about 225g / 8oz, cleaned
50g / 2oz butter or margarine
1 celery stalk, sliced
2 spring onions, chopped
50g / 2oz mushrooms, sliced
30ml / 2tbls finely chopped fresh parsley
5ml / 1tsp grated lemon zest
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
large pinch dried basil
pepper
2 slices white bread, cut into 6mm / ¼in cubes
225g / 8oz peeled prawns, thawed

SERVES 4

1 In a medium bowl, combine the butter, celery and spring onions. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 4-6 minutes, or until the celery is tender.

2 Stir in the mushrooms, parsley, lemon zest, salt, basil and pepper, then add the bread cubes and toss until thoroughly coated with the vegetable mixture. Chop the prawns into small pieces; mix into the stuffing.

3 Spoon one-quarter of the stuffing into each trout. Place in a shallow dish, cover with cling film and microwave at 100% (High) for 4-6 minutes, turning the fish once during cooking. Leave to stand for 5 minutes before serving.

Freezer Notes

Unwrap 4 frozen trout and place on a baking tray or roasting rack. Cover, then microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 10 minutes. Spoon the stuffing into the trout; re-cover and microwave at 70% (Medium) for 20-25 minutes, or until the flesh near the backbone flakes easily with a fork. Rearrange trout once or twice during cooking.

The cooked stuffed trout can also be frozen; open freeze until firm, then wrap and freeze for not more than 2 months.

Speedy bacon dishes

Say goodbye to greasy pans and cooking smells when you 'fry' or 'grill' bacon in your microwave cooker. Bacon cooked this way is delicious — and leaves little mess!

Frying or grilling bacon conventionally can be rather a greasy business, but bacon cooked in your microwave leaves very little mess. Microwaved bacon does not curl, spatter or shrink as much as conventionally cooked bacon rashers.

There are several ways to cook bacon in a microwave cooker. One of the simplest is to cook it on absorbent paper, which produces crisp, unfatty rashers. It can also be cooked on a roasting rack or in a browning utensil.

Bacon with a high sugar content may leave brown spots and stick to the paper; do not worry if this happens — just peel the paper away carefully.

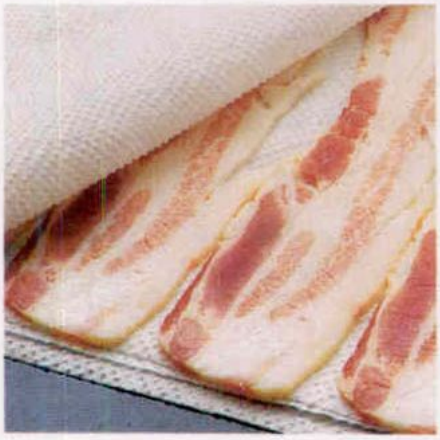
The time taken to microwave bacon will depend on the thickness of the rashers and the amount of sugar used in curing. Thick slices and home cures take more time than thin or unsmoked rashers.

The cooking times given here are for medium-cooked bacon. Increase or reduce the times if you prefer crisper or less well done rashers. When microwaving several layers of bacon at once, reduce the cooking time per rasher (see steps).

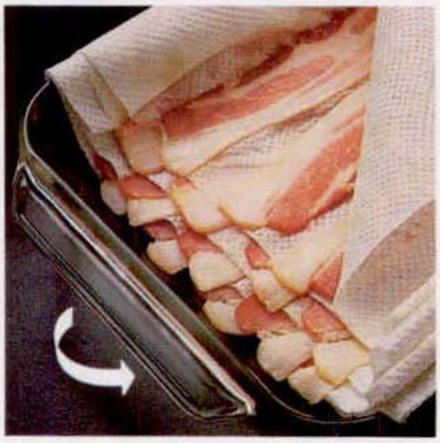
Always undercook bacon slightly and leave it to stand for 5 minutes to crisp up before serving.

Bacon and Egg Muffin

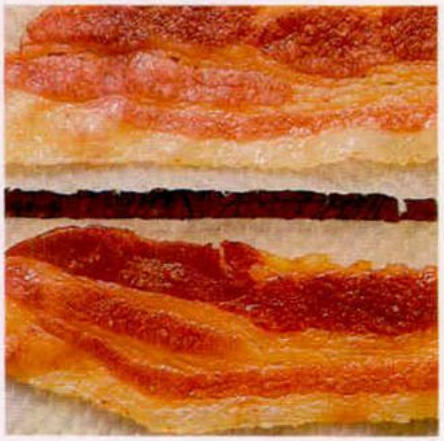
How to microwave bacon



Arrange *up to 6 bacon rashers on 3 layers of absorbent paper; cover with absorbent paper to avoid spattering. Microwave at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds per rasher.*



Use *a dish lined with absorbent paper to cook several layers of bacon. Allow 30-45 seconds per rasher if cooking more than 6. Rotate the dish ½ turn after half the cooking time.*



Remove *bacon while still underdone; fat should be slightly translucent and bubbly (top). Leave to stand for 5 minutes after microwaving; it will be evenly cooked and brown (bottom).*

RAY DUNS

Spaghetti carbonara

7¾ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

300g / 10oz spaghetti
10 bacon rashers
40g / 1½oz butter or margarine
50g / 2oz Parmesan cheese
100ml / 4fl oz double cream
3 eggs
salt
black pepper
finely chopped parsley, to garnish

SERVES 4

1 Cook the pasta conventionally while microwaving the bacon.
2 Arrange the bacon on absorbent paper or on a roasting rack in a baking dish. Cover with absorbent paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 5-8 minutes, or until the bacon is almost crisp. Leave to stand for 5 minutes, then crumble into small pieces.
3 Place the butter in a 2.3L / 4pt casserole, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds, or until melted. Mix in the cheese, cream, eggs and bacon.
4 Drain the spaghetti and mix into the sauce mixture. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-4 minutes, or until the eggs are set, tossing the spaghetti every minute. Season to taste; scatter over the parsley and serve at once.

Bacon puffs

6 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

4 bacon rashers
225g / 8oz cream cheese
1 egg yolk
5ml / 1tsp baking powder
2 spring onions, finely chopped
30 cheese biscuits or crackers

SERVES 6-8

1 Microwave the bacon on absorbent paper for 3-4 minutes. Leave to stand for 5 minutes, then crumble.
2 Meanwhile, microwave the cream cheese at 50% (Medium) for 1-1½ minutes, until softened.
3 Combine the softened cheese, egg yolk, baking powder and three quarters of the bacon and spring onions in a large bowl and beat until smooth and well blended.
4 Arrange 6 biscuits in a circle on a plate. Top each with 5ml / 1tsp cheese mixture and sprinkle with a little bacon and onion. Heat at 50% (Medium) for 25-30 seconds.
5 Repeat until all the biscuits and cheese mixture are used up.

RAY DUNS

Piquant bacon dip

2 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

2 bacon rashers
75g / 3oz cream cheese
30ml / 1tbls yoghurt or soured cream
10ml / 2tsp horseradish
1 spring onion, chopped

SERVES 2-4

1 Cook bacon as directed (see page 150). Crumble finely.
2 Place the cream cheese in a small bowl and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 30-60 seconds, until softened.
3 Blend in the yoghurt, horseradish and spring onion. Sprinkle over the bacon before serving.

VARIATION
Omit the horseradish and add 4 or 5 finely chopped radishes.

VARIATION
For a spicier snack, add a drop of Tabasco or a pinch of cayenne pepper to the cheese mixture and proceed as directed.

Bacon and egg muffins

7¼ mins

Standing time: 2 mins

15g / ½oz butter or margarine
4 eggs
8 bacon rashers, cooked (see p.150)
4 slices Edam or processed cheese
4 muffins, split and toasted

SERVES 4

1 Place a quarter of the butter in each of 4 ramekins. Microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds, until melted. Place 1 egg in each and break up with a fork. Cover. Arrange ramekins in a circle in the cooker; microwave at 100% (High) for 40-60 seconds, or until set but still slightly moist, stirring the eggs and rearranging the ramekins once. Leave to stand for 2 minutes.
2 Assemble the muffins by layering 1 slice cheese, 1 egg and 2 bacon rashers between each split muffin. Wrap each in absorbent paper; arrange in a circle in the cooker. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 2-2½ minutes, rearranging after half the time.

Lasagne bolognese

Set the scene for an Italian style dinner with this delicious lasagne. A crisp green salad and a hearty Italian Chianti will add the final touch for a friendly get together.

Bolognese sauce made in under 10 minutes in your microwave combines excellently with a rich Ricotta and egg mixture and tasty Mozzarella cheese. Layer the cheese and sauce with fresh (or pre-cooked) pasta then microwave until hot.

Lasagne bolognese

28 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

9 pieces lasagne, cooked and drained (or pre-cooked type)
450g / 1lb minced beef
1 onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
450g / 1lb canned chopped tomatoes
225g / 8oz jar thick tomato sauce
45ml / 3tbls chopped parsley
5ml / 1tsp dried oregano
5ml / 1tsp dried basil
salt and pepper
450g / 1lb Ricotta cheese
2 eggs
75g / 3oz Parmesan cheese, grated
225g / 8oz Mozzarella cheese, grated
butter for greasing

SERVES 4-6

Freezer Notes

Lasagne is a very handy dish to have in the freezer as a standby for those unexpected guests. Freeze it in the dish it is made in, them simply transfer it to your microwave.

Cover the dish with cling film rolled back at one edge and thaw at 20-30% (Defrost) for 40 minutes. Then cook for 12 minutes at 100% High. Cover loosely with foil and leave to stand for 5 minutes before serving.

How to microwave Lasagne bolognese

Microwave *the minced beef, onion and garlic at 100% (High) for 8 minutes, stirring once. Drain off fat.*

Add *the tomatoes, the tomato sauce, 30ml / 2tbls parsley, dried herbs and seasoning and set aside.*

Beat *together the Ricotta cheese, eggs, remaining parsley, 25g / 1oz Parmesan cheese and seasoning.*

Grease *a 30 x 20cm / 12 x 8in dish; layer ⅓ of lasagne, Ricotta mixture, bolognese sauce and Mozzarella.*

Repeat *the layers until all the ingredients are used up. Sprinkle the final layer of Mozzarella with the remaining Parmesan cheese.*

Microwave *the lasagne at 50% (Medium) for 20-30 minutes, turning twice. Stand for 5 minutes. Flash under a hot grill to brown.*

Barbecue party

Plan a barbecue party ahead and use your microwave to prepare in advance — cut down on mess, washing up and last minute cooking; barbecued meats will be perfectly cooked and tender.

The combined use of a microwave with your conventional barbecue can take much of the laborious and time-consuming work out of a barbecue party. Prepare nearly all the dishes in advance, partially cook the ribs or chicken and have finishing touches all ready, so that you need do only the minimum work when your guests arrive.

Careful forward planning will leave you free to entertain your guests — once your barbecue is glowing well, simply reheat the beans, add the final touches to the salad, cook the corn and finish off the ribs or chicken with the sauce on the barbecue. The rest of the meal is prepared, and there's no last-minute rush to get enough meat cooked to serve everyone all at the same time.

Corn is simple to microwave, and needs only 5 minutes standing time. It will stay hot for a good 20 minutes after this, so you can cook corn at intervals throughout the meal to provide second helpings. Microwave the tasty Cheesy Butter to accompany them just before serving, and apply it with a new paint brush or a thick pastry brush.

Barbecue food is designed for enthusiastic outdoor appetites — sticky fingers are not just unavoidable, they're part of the essential barbecue atmosphere. Make sure that plenty of thick, absorbent paper or napkins are easily to hand. Barbecues also produce a lot of debris — corn husks, bones, and, if you want to keep washing up to a minimum, disposable plates. It's helpful, therefore, to position several bins or bags in the barbecue area and save time collecting debris after the event.

For those who really want to make preparations ahead, the spicy Apple Cake can be prepared in advance and frozen. Thaw by microwaving at 20-30% (Defrost) for about 1 minute for each piece, then leave to stand for 3-5 minutes. The rich frosting can be added to the thawed cake the day before the barbecue.

A well-flavoured sauce is a must when barbecueing meat from the microwave — the recipe given provides a thick, brushing sauce with a tangy flavour; if you prefer, blend the sauce to a purée before straining — this will give a sauce with a thinner consistency, which would be more suitable for generous basting of the cooking meats.

However you choose to plan your barbecue, a microwave will prove invaluable from the start of the preparations to the very end.

Countdown

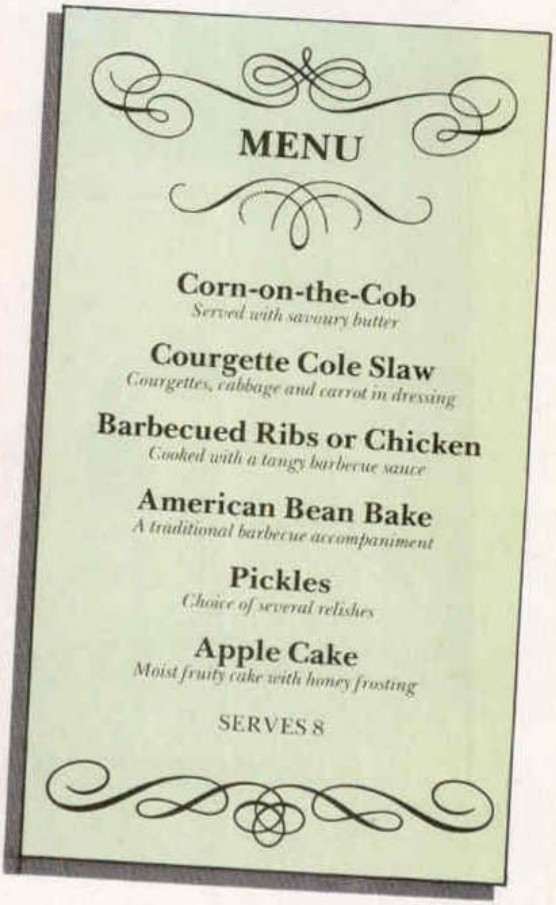
The day before
Prepare the American Bean Bake, if wished, and store, covered, in the refrigerator overnight. When reheating from the refrigerator allow an extra 5-10 minutes. Set the microwave at 100% (High) and heat for 20-25 minutes.
Cook the Spicy Apple Cake and spread with the frosting. Cover with foil to store.
Make the Barbecue Sauce, cool and leave, covered, in the refrigerator.

Early on the day
Assemble the Courgette Coleslaw and pour on the dressing. Cover and chill until needed.

In the afternoon
Microwave the ribs or chicken and leave marinating in the barbecue sauce in the refrigerator.

1½ hours before serving
Start the charcoal fire so that it will be glowing by the time you want to cook on it. Reheat the beans. Microwave at 100% (High) for about 20-25 minutes. Set aside, still covered — they will hold their heat for 45 minutes.

Just before serving
Microwave the corn, 4 at a time and prepare the Cheesy Butter. Cook the ribs or chicken on the barbecue for about 10 minutes, or until tender and hot through. Serve the meat with the coleslaw, buttered sweet corn, baked beans and pickles of your choice, followed by the apple cake.



Corn-on-the-cob

20 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

8 corn-on-the-cob, with husks
Cheesy Butter (right)

SERVES 8

1 Arrange up to 4 corn cobs in the cooker, well spaced out.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for the following times, according to the number of corn cobs used:
For 1 allow 3-5 minutes, or for 2, 4-9 minutes, turning after half the cooking time. For 3, allow 9-12 minutes, or for 4, 10-13 minutes, turning after every 4 minutes.*
3 Allow to stand for 5 minutes, then, using a piece of absorbent paper, hold the corn with the tip pointing up. Pull back the husk leaves, being careful to avoid the steam. Pull the silky strands away sharply in the other hand.
4 Serve with the Cheesy Butter.

Cheesy butter

2½ mins

Standing time: none

225g / 8oz butter
15ml / 1tbls dried chives
2.5ml / ½tsp sugar
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
pinch of pepper
15-25g / ½-1oz Parmesan cheese, grated

SERVES 8

1 Combine the butter, chives, sugar, salt and pepper in a 1L / 1¾pt casserole. Cover.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 2½ minutes, or until the butter melts, stirring after half the time.
3 Stir in the Parmesan cheese.

Courgette coleslaw

1½ mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb white cabbage, shredded
225g / 8oz courgettes, grated
3-4 small carrots, grated
1 onion, chopped
50g / 2oz sugar
50ml / 2fl oz vinegar
1.5ml / ¼tsp celery seed
salt and pepper

SERVES 8

1 In a large bowl, toss the cabbage, courgettes, carrots and onion together, then set aside.
2 In a medium-sized bowl, mix the remaining ingredients together. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1½ minutes until the sugar has dissolved and the dressing is hot.
3 Pour the hot dressing over the vegetables and toss to coat.

* In Australia cook corn cobs in 2tbls water, tightly covered.

American bean bake

31 mins

Standing time: none

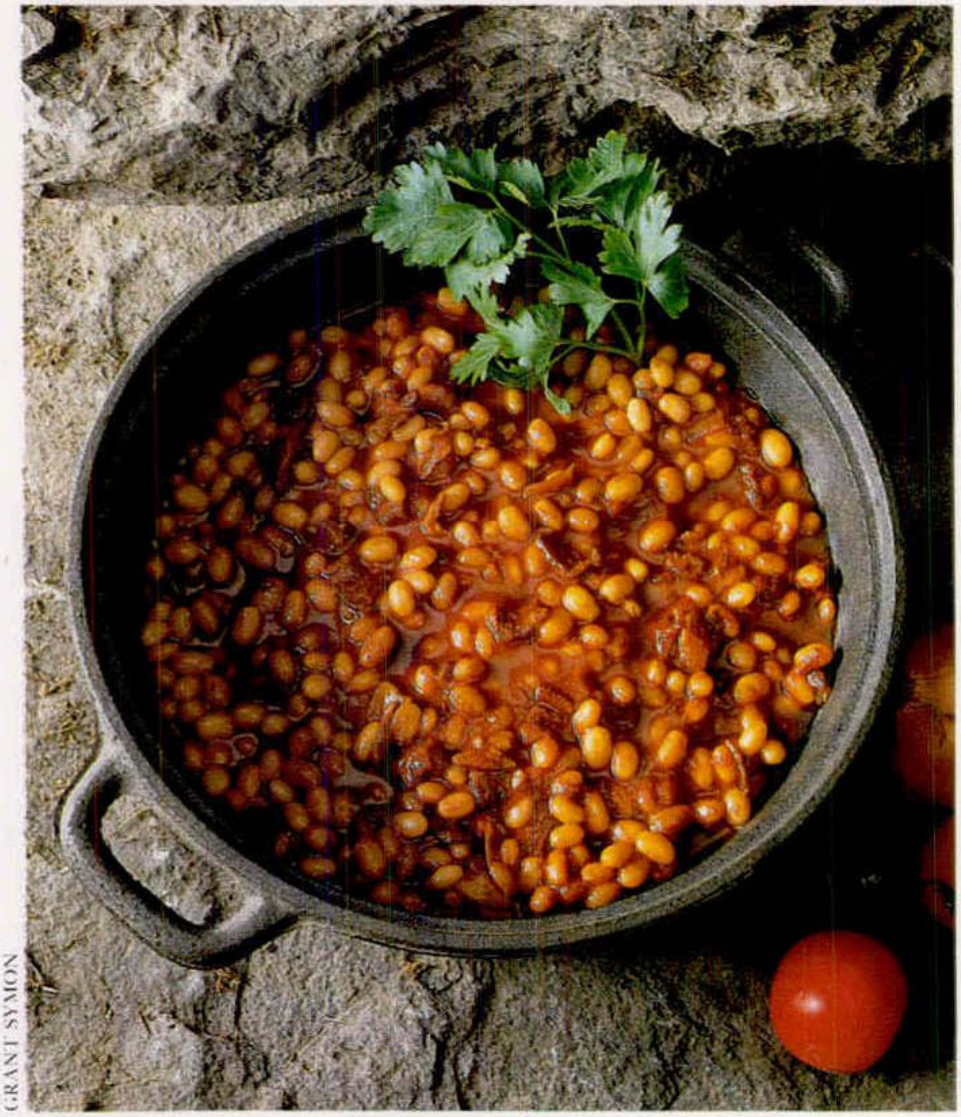
To make in your microwave, try this quick and easy version of barbecued baked beans. In America no barbecue party would be complete without this tasty filling dish, and you will find it an ideal accompaniment.

450g / 1lb onions, chopped
30ml / 2tbls oil
3 x 450g / 15oz cans baked beans
5ml / 1tsp salt
pepper
30ml / 2tbls black treacle
30ml / 2tbls tomato purée
25g / 1oz soft brown sugar
10ml / 2tsp French mustard
8 bacon rashers, rinds removed

SERVES 8

1 Put the onions and oil into a bowl, cover with cling film rolled back at one edge, and microwave at 100% (High) for 8 minutes, until tender. Stir twice.
2 Stir the beans into the onions. Add the seasonings, treacle, tomato purée, sugar and French mustard and stir until all the ingredients are thoroughly blended.
3 Meanwhile, put the bacon on a roasting rack and cover with absorbent paper. Microwave at 100% (High) for 8 minutes.
4 Cut the bacon into 2.5cm / 1in pieces and stir into the baked bean mixture. Cover the bowl with cling film rolled back at one edge, and microwave on 100% (High) for 15-18 minutes or until the beans are piping hot and cooked through. Turn into a heated metal serving dish and put onto the barbecue/grid to keep hot.

VARIATION
If you wish you can use other cooked, canned beans such as borlotti, cannelini or white haricot. Prepare as the recipe above combining the drained canned beans with the cooked onions, bacon and other ingredients. Add 150ml / ¼pt water to this mixture and microwave on 100% (High) for 15-18 minutes.



GRANT SYMON

Barbecue chicken

36 mins

Standing time: none

2.5kg / 6lb small chicken pieces (drumsticks and thighs)
Barbecue Sauce (see recipe)

SERVES 8

1 Arrange 450g / 1lb chicken pieces in a layer on a roasting rack or in a large baking dish. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 6 minutes, rearranging the pieces and turning them over 3 times during the cooking time.
3 Repeat with remaining chicken.
4 Place the cooked chicken on a barbecue over hot charcoal and continue to cook until tender, brushing with the barbecue sauce.

Barbecue ribs

40 mins

Standing time: none

25kg / 6lb spare ribs, cut into single rib pieces
Barbecue Sauce (see recipe)

SERVES 8

1 Arrange half of the ribs in a single layer in a large baking dish, overlapping slightly.
2 Add 50ml / 2 fl oz water and cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 15 minutes, turning once. Drain and repeat with the remaining ribs.
4 Place the ribs on a barbecue over hot charcoal, brush with sauce and cook, turning, for 10 minutes.

Barbecue sauce

30 mins

Standing time: none

350g / 12oz onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
15ml / 1tbls vegetable oil
75g / 3oz dark soft brown sugar
7.5ml / 1½tsp dried basil
7.5ml / 1½tsp salt
1.5ml / ¼tsp pepper
2 x 450g / 15oz cans chopped tomatoes
300g / 11oz jar tomato purée
75ml / 3 fl oz tomato ketchup
75ml / 3 fl oz cider vinegar
30ml / 2tbls black treacle
50ml / 2 fl oz Worcestershire sauce
15ml / 1tbls French mustard
10ml / 2tsp barbecue sauce
2.5ml / ½tsp Tabasco sauce

MAKES 1.1L / 2pt

1 Mix the onion, garlic and oil in a large casserole. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, or until softened.
2 Mix in the remaining ingredients. Microwave at 100% (High) for 25 minutes, until thick.
3 Use to brush over the chicken pieces or pork spare ribs while barbecueing. If wished,, purée the sauce, then sieve to remove the seeds.

Freezer Notes

This sauce is an excellent standby for adding flavour to meat and poultry dishes. It's a good idea to make extra quantities and store them in the freezer for later use.

This recipe makes 1.1L / 2pt of sauce, for 8 people. If you need less, prepare the same amount but freeze it in 2 or 3 freezer proof plastic bags or plastic containers.

The Barbecue Sauce freezes just as well whether it is puréed or kept thicker by not blending to a purée at the end of the cooking time. If the sauce is made into a purée it will provide a more even coating for basting and you may find it easier to work with.

Spicy apple cake

22 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

150g / 5oz plain flour
275g / 10oz soft brown sugar
7.5ml / 1½tsp baking powder
7.5ml / 1½tsp ground cinnamon
5ml / 1tsp bicarbonate of soda
2.5ml / ½tsp grated nutmeg
generous pinch of ground cloves
700g / 1½lb apples, peeled and grated
225ml / 8fl oz vegetable oil
4 eggs
25g / 1oz finely chopped nuts
Honey Frosting (see recipe)

SERVES 8

1 Place all the ingredients except the frosting in a large bowl. Blend at low speed with a mixer.
2 When well mixed, beat at medium speed for 2 minutes, then divide between two greased; deep 20cm / 8in round dishes.
3 Place one dish at a time on an inverted saucer in the oven. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 6 minutes, turning twice.
4 Increase the power to 100% (High) and microwave for 5 minutes, until moist but firm.
5 Leave to stand for 10 minutes, then turn out to cool. Sandwich the cakes together with frosting and cover the top.

Honey frosting

1½ mins

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz soft brown sugar
50g / 2oz butter
75g / 3oz honey
350g / 12oz icing sugar, sifted
5ml / 1tsp vanilla essence
15ml / 1tbls milk

SERVES 8

1 Mix the brown sugar, butter and honey in a large bowl. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes or until boiling, stirring after half the time. Boil for 30 seconds.
2 Stir in the icing sugar and vanilla essence. Add the milk, a little at a time, beating until smooth and of a spreading consistency. Allow to cool before using.

RAY DUNS

Reheating food

All sorts of food will taste as good as freshly cooked when reheated in a microwave — some will even taste better! Use your cooker for convenient and economic, piping hot meals.

Microwave cookers are ideal for reheating previously cooked food — they are quick and much more efficient than a conventional cooker. In a microwave, reheated food tastes just as good as it did freshly cooked; the colour and texture will be perfectly preserved as well as the majority of the nutrients.

There are dishes, such as casseroles, which really benefit from reheating. Make them the day before, refrigerate, then reheat on a low setting; the flavour will be improved and meat tenderized.

Many of the same principles of cooking food in a microwave apply to reheating food. Put thick pieces of food to the outside of the plate; stir or rotate main dishes.

Heat several plates of food at a time using microwave stacking rings.

RAY DUNS

Hints for reheating

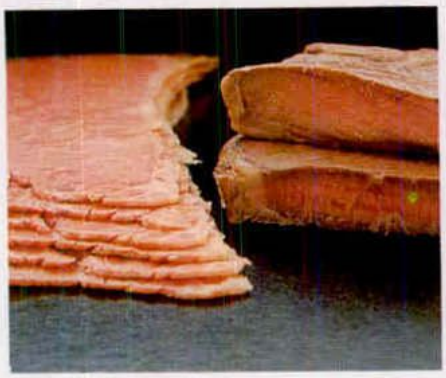
Casseroles *and main course dishes reheat very well; always cover when microwaving. Use the dish lid, cling film rolled back at one edge or greaseproof paper.*

Stir *main dishes and casseroles during reheating. Stir from the outside to the inside of the dish to distribute the heat. If stirring is impossible, rotate the dish once or twice during microwaving.*

Place *the thinner parts of meat towards the centre of the plate and cover with sauce or gravy to ensure they do not dry out.*

Wrap *moist or starchy vegetables securely in cling film and they will reheat and taste just as good as freshly cooked.*

Cooked meat



Timing *is very important when reheating. Rare meat must be caught at exactly the right moment or it will start to cook further.*

Bread

Wrap *bread in absorbent paper to absorb moisture. It will toughen if allowed to over-heat. One roll takes only 8-12 seconds.*

Successful reheating

Many main course dishes reheat very well. Cover them securely during reheating but stir casseroles and main dishes to distribute the heat and shorten the reheating time. If this is not possible, remember to rotate the dish during microwaving.

Slices of meat tend to reheat more quickly and consistently than thicker pieces of meat. Place slices in the centre of the plate or dish and cover with a sauce or gravy to give added moisture.

Some vegetables reheat extremely successfully — especially those cooked in a sauce. Use a covered dish but again, remember to stir during microwaving to distribute the heat. Starchy vegetables can also be reheated, but wrap them well in cling film to retain moisture. Avoid reheating fibrous vegetables such as artichokes, asparagus or broccoli, as they tend to lose their texture and become tough.

Breads also reheat well, a useful standby for unexpected guests. To keep them dry and to stop them becoming tough wrap in absorbent paper and keep a sharp eye on the timing. Pastry desserts reheat well, but do not overheat; fillings will be hot while the pastry is still quite cool. Leave them to stand and the pastry will heat through during this time.

A handy hint; coffee will taste freshly brewed when it is reheated.

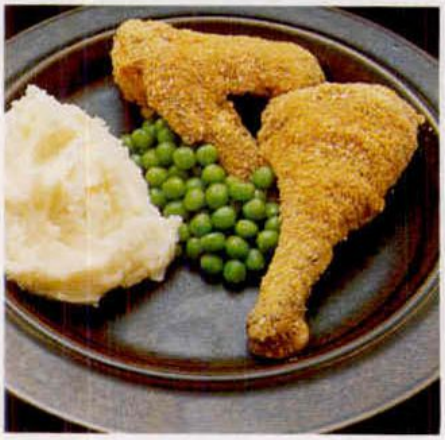
Pies

Sweet *pie fillings will become hot while the pastry is still cool, standing time will equalize the temperature between the two.*

Microwave times for reheating

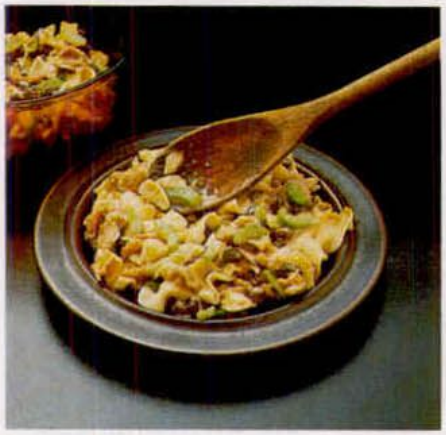
Food	Quantity	Time	Procedure
Rice	550g / 1¼lb	3 mins	In greased bowl, with knob butter
Pasta	575g / 1lb 5 oz	5 mins	As for rice
Plated meal	175g / 6oz meat 275g / 10oz veg.	3-4 mins	Covered
Corn cob	225g / 8oz	1½-2 mins	Wrapped
Baked potato	225g / 8 oz	1½-2 mins	Wrapped
Quiche	425g / 15oz	3½ mins	Wrapped
slice	125g / 4oz	½-1 mins	Wrapped
Rice pudding	425g / 15oz can	3 mins	Covered
Steamed pudding	150g / 5oz portion	1-1½ mins	Covered
Casseroles	1.1kg / 2½lb	10 mins	Stir every 2 mins Stand 5 mins
Lasagne	1 portion	4 mins	Covered

How to reheat plates of food



Arrange *thick or dense foods to the outside of the plate and delicate food, such as peas or sliced vegetables, in the centre where there is less heat.*

Cover *single plates and the top plate of a stack with cling film rolled back at one edge or use special microwave stacking rings with their own lid.*



Food *such as pasta dishes to be reheated on a plate should be spread out to an even layer for quick and uniform heating.*

Food *is hot enough to serve when it reaches a high enough temperature to conduct some heat to the bottom of the plate.*

Reheating on a plate

Meals on a plate can be prepared up to 24 hours ahead and stored in the refrigerator; or made up to a week ahead and put into the freezer. This is a handy way to cook ahead for members of the family who may want to eat at awkward times or to be prepared for late-arriving guests.

Place all the food inside the lip of the plate so the heat will penetrate consistently. Larger, thicker pieces of meat must be arranged on the outside of the plate with more delicate food such as vegetables in the centre. If you are only reheating one item on a plate, spread this out to an even layer to aid heating.

You can cook up to three plates of food at a time, stacking them on top of each other. Either use the specially available microwave stacking rings — which are best as they allow the air to circulate underneath each plate — or use a make-do alternative of upturned soup plates. Only the top plate of food needs to be covered with cling film or a lid.

If you have a solid piece of food such as meat, it is best to alternate its position vertically when you are stacking more than one plate for reheating. Rotate the plates during reheating as you would for cooking. When the bottom of the plate is warm to the touch it is a good indication that the food is completely reheated through.

Microtips

Christmas pudding and other steamed puddings take only minutes to cook in a microwave; but when you are reheating them you have to take care they do not lose their moisture or texture. For the best results arrange single slices of pudding around the outside edge of a plate and put a glass of water in the centre to prevent the pieces overcooking during reheating. Microwave at 100% (High) until the pudding is hot enough to transfer heat to the plate. Flambé the pudding in liqueur, if wished.

Chicken from the freezer

Frozen chicken pieces and a microwave are a winning combination. The chicken can be taken out of the freezer, thawed and cooked in the microwave and presented at the table within an hour.

Chicken pieces are extremely versatile. They are suitable for almost any occasion and so really deserve a place in your freezer. If thawing only takes a few minutes in the microwave, think of the delicious dinners, suppers and lunches you can prepare at just a moment's notice.

Chicken can be bought in pieces — breasts, thighs, wings, drumsticks — or as a whole bird and cut up into sections. If you intend to freeze chicken, put it into the freezer as soon as you get home.

Wash the chicken in cold water and dry it before wrapping in cling film and packing in freezer bags. Label and freeze for up to 6 months. Once thawed chicken should be used straight away or on the following day.

Chicken Breasts à l'Orange

Chicken breasts à l'orange

13 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

4 frozen boneless chicken breasts, thawed, split and skin removed

STUFFING
30ml / 2tbls dry vermouth
25g / 1oz raisins
1 celery stalk, chopped
40g / 1½oz butter or margarine
3 spring onions, chopped
40g / 1½oz dried breadcrumbs
7.5ml / 1½tsp grated orange zest
1 garlic clove, crushed

TO SERVE
90ml / 6tbls orange juice
90ml / 6tbls water
7.5ml / 1½tsp cornflour
40g / 3oz raisins
7.5ml / 1½tsp brown sugar
large pinch of ground allspice
pinch of ground ginger
salt and pepper
4 thin orange slices

SERVES 4

1 Beat out the chicken breasts to 6mm / ¼in thickness. Combine the raisins and vermouth in a small bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-1½ minutes.
2 In a casserole, combine the celery, butter and spring onions. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, stirring once or twice. Stir in the breadcrumbs, zest, garlic and raisins.
3 Place a quarter of the stuffing at one end of each chicken breast. Roll up, folding in the sides. Secure with 2 wooden cocktail sticks.
4 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes; reduce power to 50% (Medium) and cook for 5 minutes, or until the chicken is no longer pink, rearranging once or twice. Leave to stand for 5 minutes.
5 In a small bowl, mix together the orange juice, water and cornflour. Stir in the remaining ingredients except the orange slices. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3½ minutes, or until thickened, stirring once or twice.
6 Spoon the glaze over the breasts; place 1 orange slice on each.

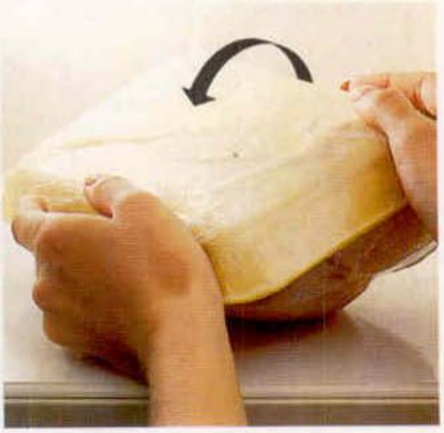
How to thaw boneless chicken pieces

Place *the paper- or plastic-wrapped package in the cooker. Thaw for half the calculated time (see page 165).*

Unwrap *and separate the pieces. Arrange on rack with least thawed parts outward. Thaw for rest of time.*

How to thaw chicken quarters or pieces

Remove *twist ties if in plastic bag. Place un-opened paper- or plastic-wrapped package in the cooker.*



Thaw *for half the total time. Turn the package over. Drain off excess water. Thaw for quarter of remaining time.*

Unwrap *and separate the pieces. Arrange in a dish with meatiest parts outward. Microwave for remaining time.*

Let stand *for 5 minutes or until the chicken feels soft but cold. Wash the pieces in cold water before using.*

Chicken and yellow rice

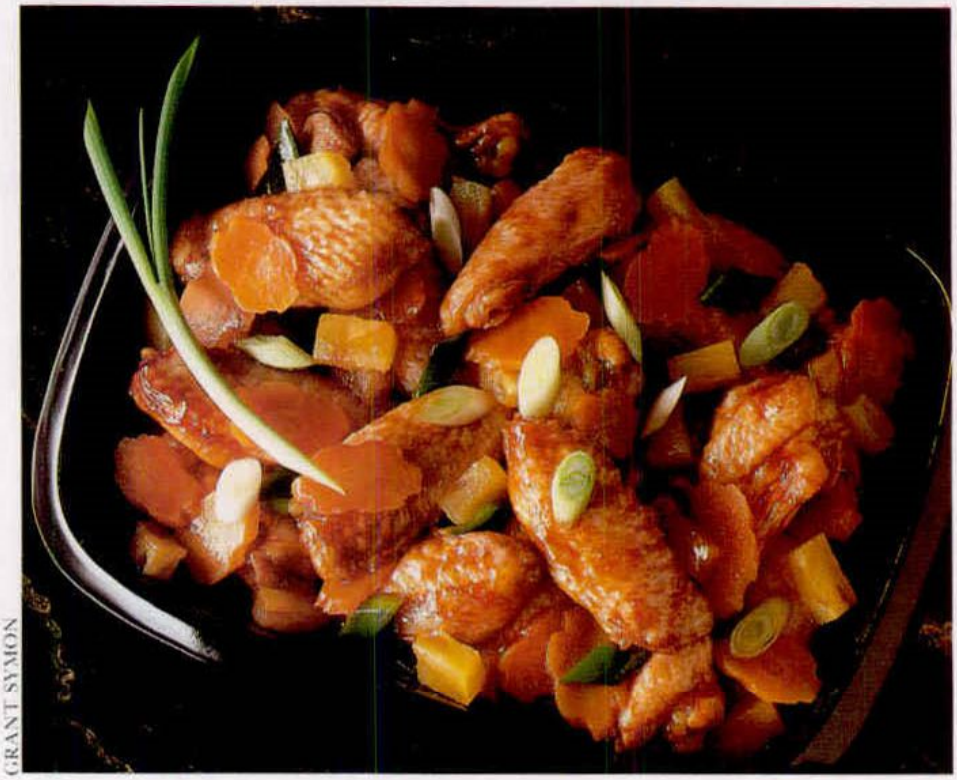
29 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

6 x 175g / 6oz frozen boneless chicken pieces, thawed and diced
1 onion, chopped
2 green peppers, chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
45ml / 3tbls olive oil
350g / 12oz long grain rice
1L / 1¾pt hot chicken stock
pinch of saffron
salt and pepper
3 tomatoes, peeled and chopped

SERVES 4-6

1 In a large casserole, combine the onion, green pepper, garlic and olive oil and cover with a lid or cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4-6 minutes, stirring once during the cooking time.
2 Add the chicken, stir, re-cover with the lid or cling film rolled back at one edge, and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Stir once during the cooking time.
3 Add the rice, chicken stock, saffron and seasoning to taste. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 10 minutes.
4 Stir the casserole, then reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave, covered, for a further 10 minutes, until the rice is cooked.
5 Stir in the chopped tomatoes. Cover with a lid or cling film and allow to stand for 5 minutes to warm the tomatoes and complete the cooking. Serve hot.



GRANT SYMON

Sweet and sour chicken wings

8 mins

Standing time: none

900g / 2lb frozen chicken wings, thawed
50ml / 2fl oz white wine vinegar
15ml / 1tbls honey
15ml / 1tbls soy sauce
45ml / 3tbls tomato ketchup
2.5ml / ½tsp ground ginger
225g / 8oz can pineapple chunks, drained
2.5ml / ½tsp Worcestershire sauce
½ green pepper, cut in diamonds
2 carrots, cut in flower shapes
1 spring onion, sliced diagonally
1 spring onion, trimmed, for decoration

SERVES 6

1 Cut the chicken wings into 3 pieces, separating them at the joints. Discard the wing tips.
2 Combine the remaining ingredients, except the pepper, carrots and spring onions; add chicken pieces. Cover and chill overnight.
3 Place the mixture in a 20cm / 8in dish. Add the pepper, carrot and sliced spring onion. Stir, then cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 8-12 minutes, or until the chicken is fork tender, stirring once. Garnish with spring onion.

Microwave times for thawing chicken pieces

TYPE	QUANTITY	TIME AT 30% (LOW)	STANDING TIME
Quarters	4 x 225g / 8oz	15 minutes	10 minutes
Wings	900g / 2lb 450g / 1lb	15 minutes 8 minutes	10 minutes 10 minutes
Drumsticks	6 x 100g / 4oz	12 minutes	10 minutes
Breasts boneless	4 x 225g / 8oz 2 x 225g / 8oz	15 minutes 8 minutes	10 minutes 10 minutes
Thighs	8 x 100g / 4oz 4 x 100g / 4oz	15 minutes 8 minutes	10 minutes 10 minutes

Fruit-glazed chicken thighs

18½ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

1 apple, cored and chopped
1 orange, divided into sections and chopped
50g / 2oz rice, cooked
30ml / 2tbls chopped dried chives
50g / 2oz orange marmalade
25ml / 5tsp butter or margarine
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground coriander
large pinch of salt and pepper
8 frozen chicken thighs, thawed
1.5ml / ¼tsp Worcestershire sauce
10ml / 2tsp sesame seeds

SERVES 4-6

1 In a medium bowl, combine the apple, orange, rice, chives, half the marmalade, 15ml / 3tsp butter or margarine, coriander, salt and pepper. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until very hot, stirring after half the time. Leave to stand, covered, for 5 minutes.
3 Loosen the skin from the chicken to form a pocket. Stuff each pocket with 15ml / 1tbls of the mixture. Arrange the stuffed thighs on a roasting rack.
4 Combine the remaining marmalade, butter and Worcestershire sauce in a bowl. Cover.
5 Microwave at 100% (High) for 30-35 seconds, or until heated, stirring after half the time. Brush the glaze over the stuffed thighs. Sprinkle with the sesame seeds.
6 Microwave at 100% (High) for 15 minutes, or until the chicken near the bone is no longer pink. Rotate and rearrange twice.

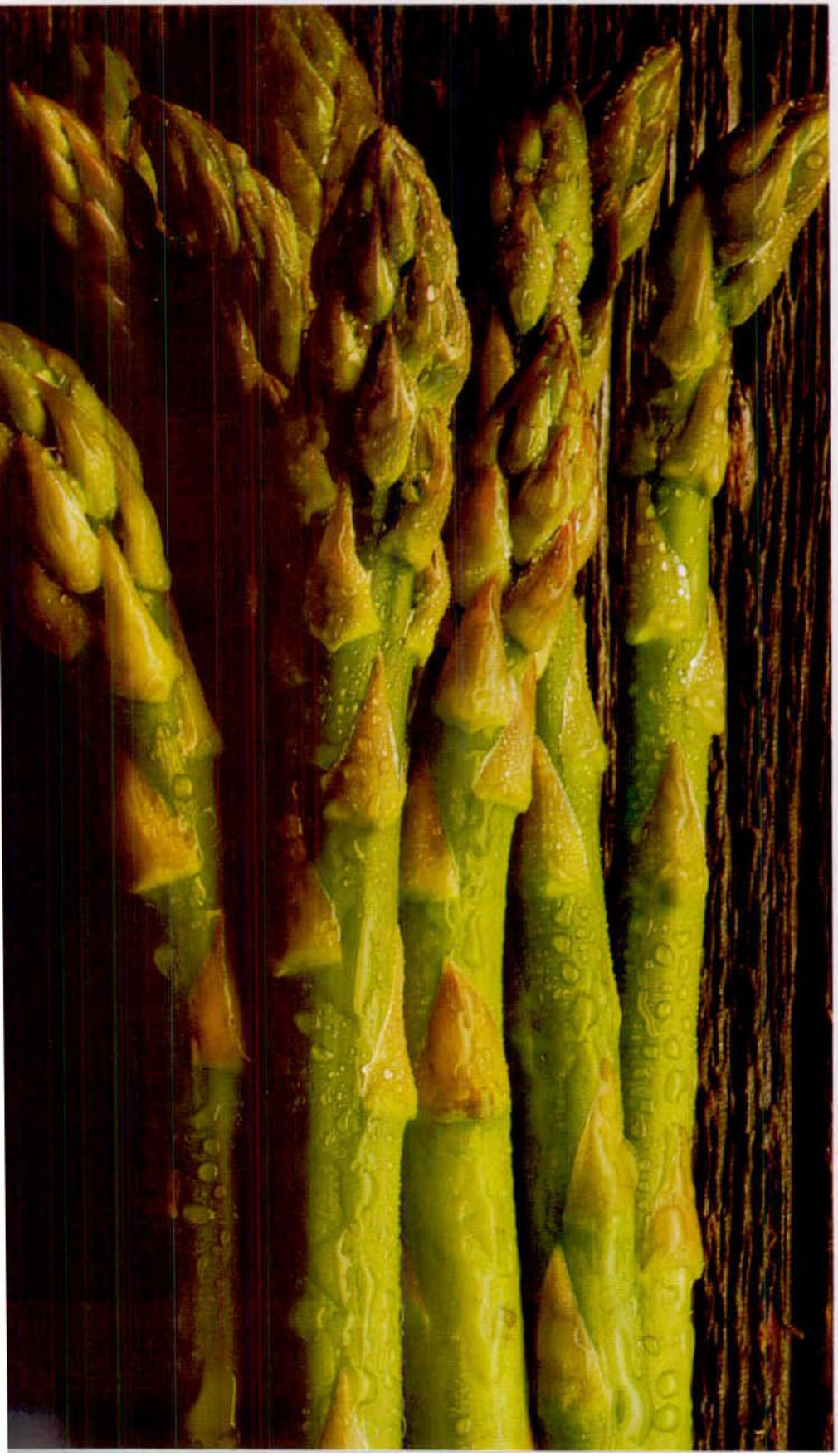
Microtips

It is very important to check that the chicken thighs are thoroughly thawed before microwaving. If some of the thighs are smaller than others, remove them from the microwave as soon as they are ready.

You can also make this dish with boned chicken thighs; if using allow 6-10 minutes cooking time.

Asparagus

One of the most luxurious of all vegetables, asparagus is excellent when prepared in the microwave. Tender, crispy and delicious, give yourself a treat with these asparagus recipes.



The delicious and unique flavour of asparagus adds a distinct touch of class to any meal, whether it is served as a starter, accompanying vegetable or a meal in itself. Asparagus is an expensive seasonal delicacy (although, of course it is available frozen at any time of year) so it is particularly important to prepare it with care.

Like all vegetables, asparagus really benefits from microwave cooking — all the flavour and goodness are retained and the spears remain green and perfectly crisp and tender. Always try to buy spears of uniform size so that they will cook evenly.

Cooking asparagus conventionally can be an intricate procedure. With a microwave, there is no need to stand the spears upright or to tie them into neat bundles before cooking — just follow the simple instructions.

How to microwave and prepare asparagus

Hold *the stalk firmly near the base. Gently bend the spear until the tough stalk end snaps of. Cut off the scales with a sharp knife. Wash the asparagus spears in cold water.*

Measure *125ml / 4fl oz cold water into a shallow 30 x 20cm / 12 x 8in dish. Do not salt the water.*

Arrange *450g / 1lb asparagus spears in the dish, with the tips towards the centre. Cover with cling film.*

Microwave *for half the time (see chart, page 168). Rearrange spears from outside to middle of dish, keeping tips in the centre. Cover; microwave for remaining time until tender-crisp.*

Asparagus with mushrooms

19 mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb fresh asparagus spears
40g / 1½oz butter or margarine
10ml / 2tsp sesame seeds
125g / 4oz mushrooms, sliced
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
2.5ml / ½tsp finely grated lemon zest

SERVES 4-6

1 Prepare and cook the asparagus as directed above. Set aside.
2 Place 15g / ½oz butter in a small bowl, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds, until melted. Stir in the sesame seeds, then microwave at 100% (High) for 3-5 minutes or until brown, stirring once. Set aside.
3 Sprinkle the mushrooms over the asparagus: cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Set aside.
4 Melt the remaining butter in a small dish, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds. Stir in the lemon juice and zest.
5 Drain the mushrooms and asparagus and transfer to a serving platter. Pour over the lemon-flavoured butter and sprinkle with the sesame seeds.

VARIATION
Use blanched, slivered almonds instead of the sesame seeds if you prefer.

Freezer Notes

If fresh asparagus is not available, use 450g / 1lb frozen asparagus and cook as directed in the chart on page 168.

Cheesy asparagus

23 mins

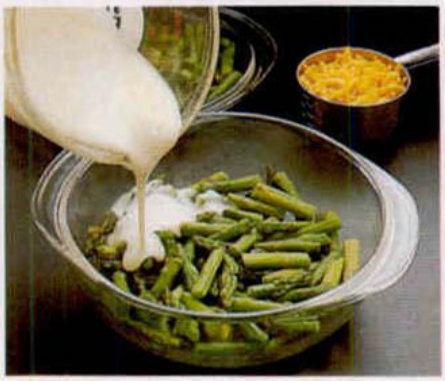
Standing time: none

900g / 2lb fresh asparagus, cut into 4cm / 1½in lengths
125ml / 4fl oz water
40g / 1½oz butter
60ml / 4tbls fine dry breadcrumbs
50g / 2oz cashew nuts
25g / 1oz plain flour
salt and pepper
250ml / 9fl oz milk
100g / 4oz Cheddar cheese, grated

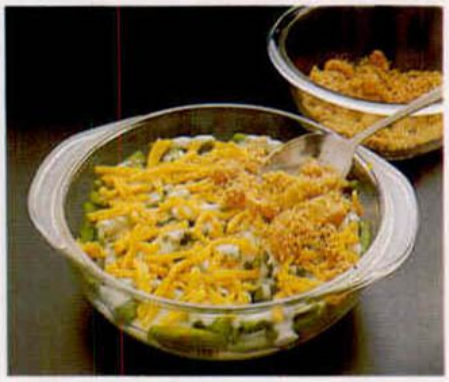
SERVES 6-8

1 Place asparagus and water in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole, cover with cling film and cook at 100% (High) for 16-18 minutes, or until tender, rearranging once. Drain; cover.
2 In a small covered bowl, melt half the butter at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds. Add breadcrumbs and nuts.
3 In a 1.1L / 2pt bowl, melt remaining butter covered at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds. Stir in the flour and seasoning, then whisk in the milk.
4 Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-5 minutes, until sauce boils and thickens. Stir once during cooking.
5 Layer the asparagus, sauce and cheese in a casserole. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.

How to layer Cheesy asparagus



Spread *half the cooked asparagus evenly in the dish. Pour over half the sauce and sprinkle over half the grated cheese.*



Repeat *the layers. Top with the breadcrumb and nut mixture. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes, until hot and bubbling.*

Microwave times for asparagus

TYPE	QUANTITY	MICROWAVE COOKING TIME AT 100% HIGH	PROCEDURE
Fresh Whole spears	450g / 1lb	12-14 minutes	Arrange spears in even layers in a shallow dish. Add 125ml / 4fl oz water. Cook covered, rearranging halfway through.
Cut spears	450g / 1lb	9-11 minutes	Place asparagus and 125ml / 4fl oz water in a 1.1L / 2pt casserole. Cook covered, stirring halfway through.
Frozen Whole spears	450g / 1lb	9-12 minutes	Cook, as for fresh, rearranging once. Let stand for 5 minutes.
Canned Whole spears	425g / 15oz	3-4 minutes	Drain asparagus. Place in a 1.1L / 2pt dish. Heat, covered, rearranging halfway through.
Cuts	300g / 11oz	2-2½ minutes	Cook as above, stirring halfway through.

Roasting and braising lamb

A nicely browned roast of lamb can be cooked quickly and successfully in your microwave cooker. Alternatively, braise it and use the cooking liquid to make a tasty sauce.

Lamb is an economical and versatile meat which will go down well with the family or with dinner party guests. Roasting lamb in the microwave cuts down radically on cooking time and produces a tasty and attractive joint which browns quite successfully during microwaving.

Lamb comes from animals up to a year old, after that it is generally known as mutton. The main producers are Europe, North America and New Zealand and supplies are fairly constant throughout the year. It is a meat which freezes well. When buying joints remember that a neat and uniform piece of meat will do best in the microwave — bone with little meat on it will burn before the rest of the meat is cooked.

A small leg of lamb will roast well in the microwave, otherwise choose half a large leg. Boned and rolled shoulder is ideal for microwaving, but shoulder with bone will also microwave well.

Marinated Leg of Lamb

GRANT SIMON

Roasting lamb.

Weigh the joint, then place the meat on a rack in a baking dish so it does not cook in its own juices. Shield any thinly covered bone with a small, smooth piece of foil and insert a microwave thermometer, or probe, from the start of cooking.

Estimate the cooking time using the chart opposite and microwave at 100% (High) for the first 5 minutes. Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for the rest of the first half of the calculated cooking time.

Remove from the microwave, turn the joint over and remove any foil shielding. Continue to microwave until the meat reaches the desired temperature (see chart). A conventional meat thermometer cannot be used in a microwave, but you can remove the joint from the oven to check temperatures. All recipe timings are for medium cooked meat. Use them as a guide but always ensure that correct internal temperatures have been reached.

Standing time

When the meat is removed from the microwave it should be loosely covered with foil and left to stand. The temperature will continue to rise during this standing time, (see chart). Carve after 15 minutes.

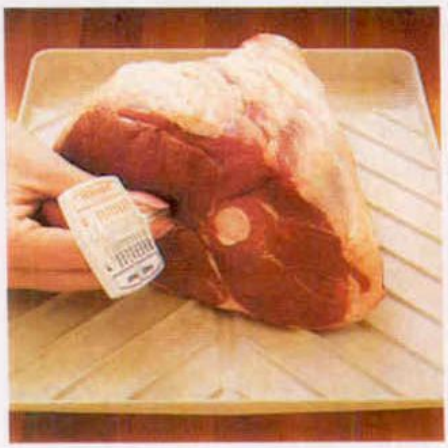
Pot roasting and braising

These two methods of cooking suit both lamb joints and the microwave cooker. A pot roast is cooked at 50% (Medium) in a covered dish. Very little liquid is added to the meat, the moisture from the meat being sufficient. Braised lamb is also cooked slowly in a covered dish but with a little more added liquid. Cook in a casserole covered with a lid, or cling film.

Using marinades

Lamb is a very tender meat so methods of cooking are concentrated on bringing out the full flavour rather than tenderizing the joint. Marinades are a useful method of giving added flavour to a dish, especially when traditional slow cooking methods are speeded up in the microwave.

How to insert a thermometer or probe

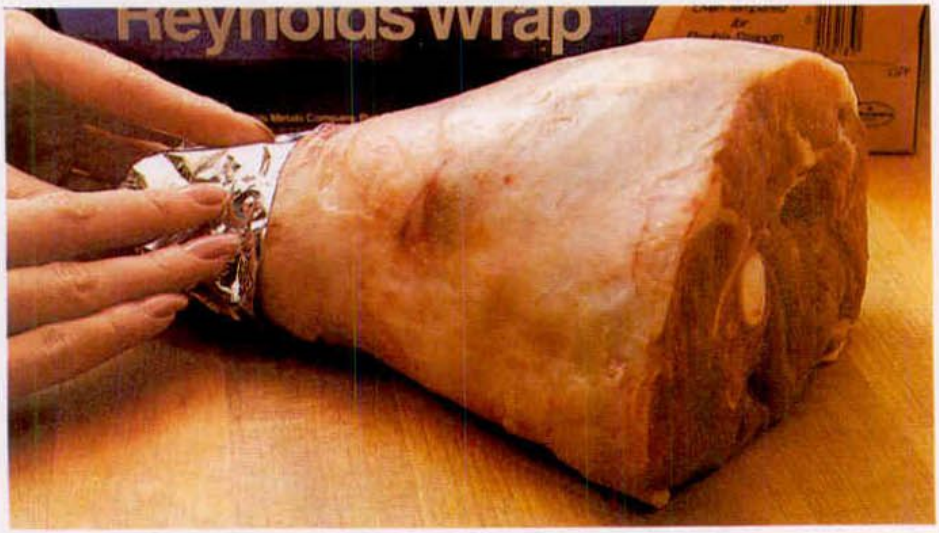


Leg with bone: *Insert thermometer at start of cooking so the tip is in the centre of meaty area and does not touch the bone.*

Boned and rolled shoulder: *Insert the thermometer at start of cooking in the centre of end or side meat, but not touching the fat.*

Boned and rolled leg: *Insert the microwave probe at start of cooking, making sure the tip of the probe is not touching the fat.*

Shoulder with bone: *Insert the microwave probe at start of cooking into the meatiest areas near the joint of bone, but not touching bone.*



Shield *the end of a full leg with a small piece of smooth foil; this will prevent the thinnest area of meat around the bone end from cooking to quickly and burning or drying out before the rest of the meat is cooked.*

Microwave roasting and standing times

MINUTES PER 450g / 1lb	TIME AT 100% (HIGH)	FINISH AT 50% (MEDIUM)	REMOVE AT INTERNAL TEMP	TEMP AFTER 10 MINS	TEMP AFTER 15 MINS
Leg with bone					
8-10	First 5 mins	Rare	54°C / 129°F	64°C / 147°F	66°C / 150°F
10-12	First 5 mins	Medium	64°C / 147°F	74°C / 165°F	76°C / 168°F
12-14	First 5 mins	Well done	70°C / 158°F	80°C / 176°F	82°C / 180°F
Shoulder					
7-9	First 5 mins	Rare	54°C / 129°F	64°C / 147°F	66°C / 150°F
9-11	First 5 mins	Medium	64°C / 147°F	74°C / 165°F	76°C / 168°F
11-13	First 5 mins	Well done	70°C / 158°F	80°C / 176°F	82°C / 180°F
Boned joints					
10-12	First 5 mins	Rare	54°C / 129°F	64°C / 147°F	66°C / 150°F
13-15	First 5 mins	Medium	64°C / 147°F	74°C / 165°F	76°C / 168°F
16-18	First 5 mins	Well done	70°C / 158°F	80°C / 176°F	82°C / 180°F

Marinated leg of lamb

39 mins

Standing time: 10-15 mins

1.4kg / 3lb boned and rolled leg of lamb
5-10ml / 1-2tsp cornflour

MARINADE
150ml / ¼pt barbecue sauce
1 small onion, finely chopped
15ml / 1tbls finely chopped mint
salt and pepper

SERVES 6

1 Combine marinade ingredients.
2 Place lamb in a shallow dish and score meat all over. Pour the marinade over the meat, cover and chill for 8 hours or overnight, turning the meat occasionally.
3 Place the meat on a roasting rack and calculate the cooking time from the chart above. Microwave at 100% (High) for the first 5 minutes, then reduce the power to 50% (Medium) for the remaining time. Turn meat over halfway through and baste occasionally with the marinade.
4 Cover the meat loosely with foil and stand for 15 minutes.
5 Bring the marinade juices to the boil, stir in the cornflour and cook for 1-2 minutes.
6 Slice the lamb, pour over a little sauce and serve with carrots and peas. Garnish with mint sprigs.

JOHN HESELTINE

Honey braised lamb

41 mins

Standing time: 10-15 mins

1.4kg / 3lb boned and rolled shoulder of lamb
30ml / 2tbls cider vinegar
15ml / 1tbls olive oil
15ml / 1tbls clear honey
2.5ml / ½tsp dried marjoram
65ml / 2½ fl oz dry cider
30ml / 2tbls soy sauce
15ml / 1tbls butter
1 onion, chopped
2 carrots, sliced
salt
pepper
25g / 1oz plain flour

SERVES 4

How to microwave Honey braised lamb

Place *the lamb in the casserole and surround it with the onion and carrots, pour over the cider and season.*

Make *a paste from the flour and a little cooking liquid. Stir into the remaining liquid to make the sauce.*

1 Combine the vinegar, oil, honey, marjoram, cider and soy sauce. Stir well. Place the lamb in a shallow dish and pour the mixture over it. Baste the lamb thoroughly and marinate for at least 5 hours or overnight. Baste occasionally.

2 Put the butter in a casserole, cover with cling film rolled back at one edge, and melt it at 100% (High) for 2 minutes. Place shoulder of lamb and marinade in the casserole with the onion and carrots. Season.

3 Calculate the cooking time from the chart and microwave the lamb at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, then reduce to 50% (Medium) for the remaining time. Turn the meat over half way through cooking. Stand covered for 15 minutes.

4 Add a little of the cooking liquid to the flour and stir to a smooth paste. Stir back into the casserole and microwave the sauce at 100% (High) for 4 minutes to thicken it, stirring twice during microwaving. Strain the sauce and serve with the lamb, cooked green beans, sliced carrots and onions. Garnish with a rosemary sprig.

Honey Braised Lamb

Microtips

Standing time also allows the meat to settle after cooking; this makes it much easier to carve.

Spicy Indian Raan

36 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

Raan is a spicy Indian lamb dish; serve it with rice and courgettes or sliced aubergine.

2kg / 4½lb leg of lamb, trimmed of fat
2 garlic cloves, crushed
2 onions
juice and zest of 1 lemon
5cm / 2in piece fresh ginger root, sliced
5ml / 1tsp cumin seeds
5ml / 1tsp cardamom seeds
5ml / 1tsp turmeric
2.5ml / ½tsp ground cloves
5ml / 1tsp salt
50g / 2oz ground almonds
15ml / 1tbls dark brown sugar
150ml / 5fl oz natural yoghurt

SERVES 6

1 Pierce the leg of lamb all over with the point of a knife. Put the garlic, onions, lemon juice and zest, ginger root, spices and salt into an electric blender and grind to a paste. Alternatively use a mortar and pestle. Spread the paste all over the lamb until it is completely covered, then place on a shallow dish and set aside for at least 1 hour.

2 Beat together the almonds, sugar and yoghurt. Spread the mixture over the lamb, cover the dish loosely with foil, and leave in the refrigerator for several hours or overnight.

3 Place the lamb in a deep casserole and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, turning the meat once during the time. Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for the remainder of the calculated cooking time (see chart), or until the lamb reaches the desired internal temperature and is tender and done to taste. Turn the meat 2 or 3 times during cooking. Leave to stand, covered loosely with foil, for 15 minutes. Garnish the lamb with watercress and serve with boiled rice and courgettes.

Spicy Indian Raan

How to microwave Raan

Grind *to a paste the garlic, onions, lemon juice and zest, ginger root, spices and salt in a blender; or use a mortar and pestle. Spread over the lamb.*

Beat *together the almonds, sugar and yoghurt and spread the mixture over the lamb. Leave to marinate in a cold place for several hours.*

Microwaving eggs

With just a little practice, you can produce the most delicious eggs from your microwave, in half the time it takes conventionally, and with half the washing-up.

For a small package, the egg contains many of life's necessities. It is rich in protein, fats and minerals, and is a reliable source of cheap energy.

Before embarking on egg cooking in the microwave, however, there is a basic difference between microwaving and cooking eggs conventionally that should be noted. In the conventional way, the outer white portion of the egg cooks first, whereas in the microwave it is the yolk that sets first. This is because the yolk contains more fat than the white and therefore attracts more microwave energy. So, if you microwave an egg until the white is set, you

Baked Eggs

will find that the yolk will toughen. For this reason standing time is an important part of microwave egg cookery. Don't be tempted to skimp on it or to let the egg stay too long in the cooker. If eggs are undercooked they can easily be put back in the microwave for a few seconds and then allowed to stand, but there is no solution for overcooking.

Eggs prove even more adaptable to the demands of time when given the microwave treatment. There is only one notable limitation: eggs must not be microwaved in their shells (see Cook's notes, below).

The recipes here concentrate on the basics of egg preparation: baking, frying in a browning dish, scrambling and poaching. Armed with these simple recipes, the microwave gives new meaning to breakfast eggs. They can then easily be extended for lunch and supper dishes. Try serving poached eggs on a bed of spinach for Eggs Florentine, or on muffins for Eggs Benedict.

As an added bonus, the washing-up is cut to a minimum when cooking eggs in the microwave. You can even scramble or brown the eggs on the serving plate itself.

Just remember that every microwave is slightly different and it will require judgement and patience to achieve accurate timing. But once mastered, the perfect poached egg and the creamiest of scrambled eggs, are yours for the eating.

Cook's notes

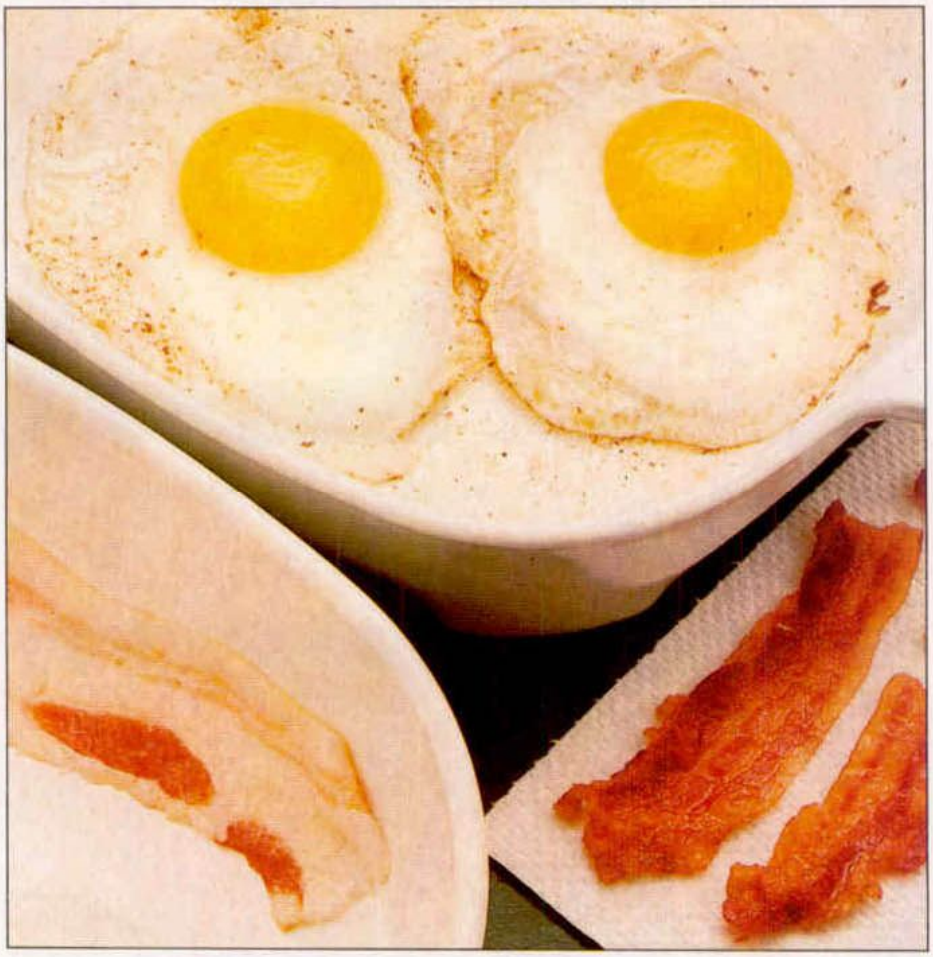
Microwaving will help your egg cookery in all sorts of unexpected ways. To achieve a greater volume of beaten egg white for making meringues or for folding into soufflés and mousses, separate the eggs and put the whites into a mixing bowl. Microwave them at 100% (High) for 5-10 seconds per egg white; do not worry if the whites 'cook' very slightly at the edge of the bowl. Beat the warmed egg whites immediately with a pinch of salt; you will find that they froth up beautifully.

How to microwave Baked eggs

Break *eggs gently into ramekins. Prick the yolk of each egg twice with a toothpick. Cover each ramekin with cling film rolled back at one edge.*

Microwave *the eggs at 50% (Medium). Two eggs will take approximately 2 minutes; 4 eggs, 4 minutes. Rotate each ramekin once.*

Browning dish bacon and eggs



Preheat *browning dish for 4 minutes at 100% (High); grease lightly. Cut 2 rashers of bacon in half. Place them on the base of the dish. Press down and leave for 10 seconds, turn over and press down again for 10 seconds; move to the sides of the dish. Break the eggs into the dish, pierce yolks with a cocktail stick. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-1½ minutes. Leave to stand for 1-2 minutes until the eggs are set.*

Scrambled eggs

You can cook beautiful, golden scrambled eggs in the microwave and all the mixing can be done in the cooking dish. The secret is to remove the eggs from the cooker when they are still quite moist and underdone. If you leave them in the microwave until they are done to your liking, they will be overcooked by the time you serve them.

The final cooking should take place outside the microwave, where you can watch the second-by-second transformation, and serve the eggs when they have reached the consistency you like. If you like your eggs creamy, add a little milk to the melted butter when adding the eggs.

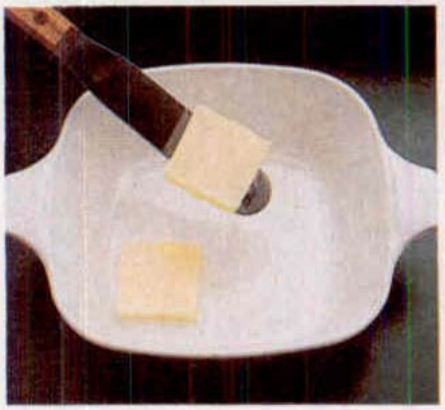
Microwave times for scrambled eggs

EGGS	BUTTER	MILK	MICROWAVE TIME AT 100% (HIGH)
1	5ml / 1tsp	15ml / 1tbls	45–60 secs
2	15g / ½oz	30ml / 2tbls	2–2¼ mins
4	15g / ½oz	30ml / 2tbls	2½–3 mins
6	25g / 1oz	60ml / 4tbls	3¼–4 mins
8	25g / 1oz	60ml / 4tbls	4½–5 mins

Cook's notes

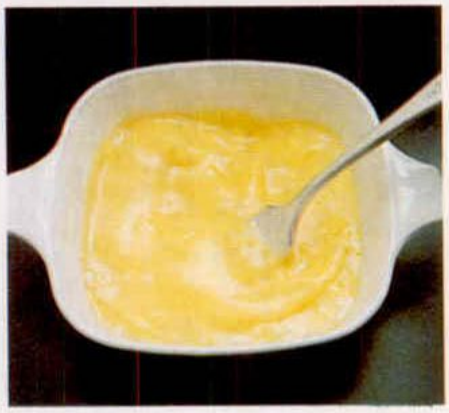
Microwave-scrambled eggs are fluffier and have more volume than conventionally scrambled eggs. The butter suggested here is for flavour only; it isn't needed to prevent sticking. So, for the calorie conscious, you can omit the butter and also substitute the same amount of water for the milk — the eggs will be slightly less creamy.

How to microwave Scrambled eggs

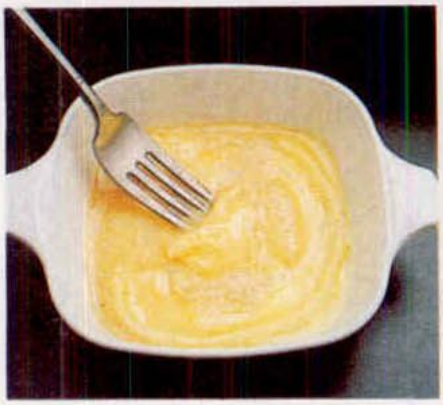


Place *the butter in a serving dish or jug. Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 30 seconds or until the butter melts.*

Add *the eggs and milk. Scramble the mixture with a fork until fairly well mixed. Microwave at 100% (High) for half the cooking time.*

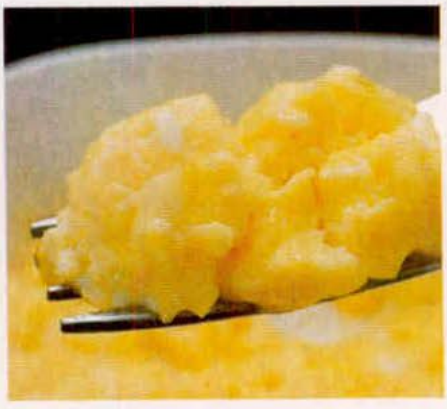


Open *the cooker door, and check the eggs; they will be beginning to set near the edges, where they receive most energy.*



Break *up any set parts and push them to the centre of the dish. Cook for the remaining time, stirring once or twice.*

Remove *the eggs from the cooker while they are still moist. Do not allow them to overcook. Leave to stand for 1–4 minutes, to taste.*



Eggs *continue to cook during the standing time. When done to your liking, give them a final stir to fluff up before serving.*

Poached eggs with spinach and bacon

Poached eggs

Eggs are easy to poach in the microwave cooker if you observe these simple rules. Bring water and vinegar to a full boil at 100% (High) before adding the egg. Reduce the power level to 50% (Medium) so the egg will poach gently. Standing time is important; it allows the white to set without overcooking the yolk. After standing, slip the egg onto a slotted spoon to drain. If the bottom is not set to your satisfaction, turn the egg over into a cup and microwave for a few seconds more.

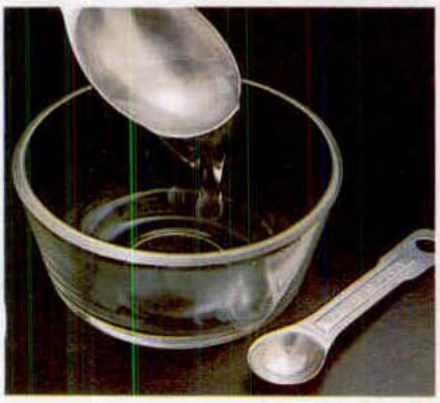
VARIATIONS

Poached eggs are delicious on toast or muffins for breakfast, but they can be used more ambitiously for other occasions. With bacon and spinach they make a nourishing lunch dish; paired with ham-topped muffins and covered in smooth, rich Hollandaise sauce (which can also be made in the microwave) they are the elegant supper dish Eggs Benedict.

Microwave times for Poached eggs

EGGS	MICROWAVE TIME AT 50% (MEDIUM)
1	¾-1¼ minutes
2	1¼-1½ minutes
3	2½-3 minutes
4	3½-4 minutes

How to microwave Poached eggs



Put *30ml / 2tbls water and 1.5ml / ¼tsp vinegar into each ramekin; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 30-40 seconds or until boiling.*

Break *eggs into dishes. Pierce yolks twice; cover. Microwave at 50% (Medium) until white is nearly set. For more than 1 egg, turn every 45 seconds.*

Leave to stand *for 2-3 minutes; shake gently once or twice during standing to help set the white. Do not uncover until standing is completed.*

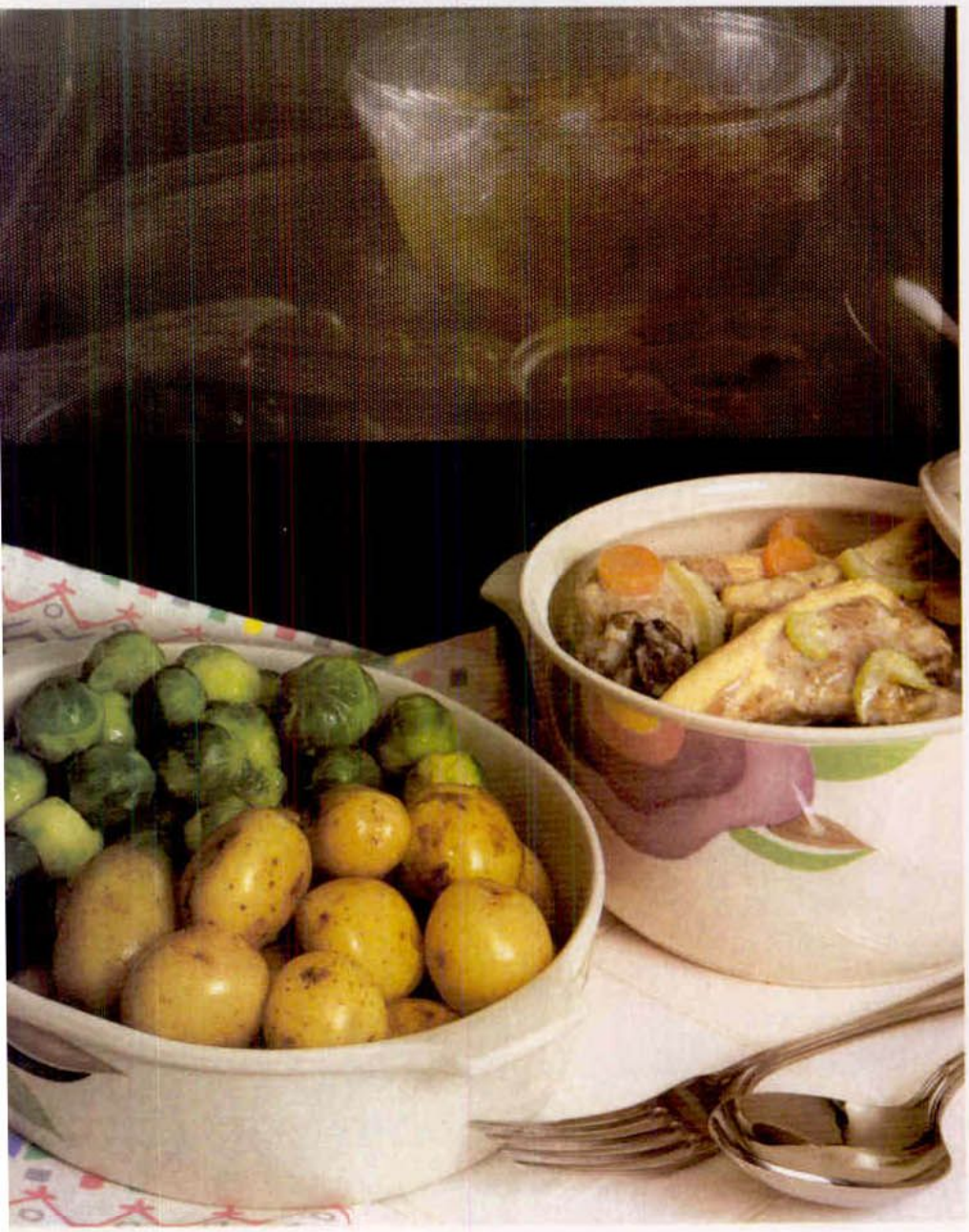
Microwave menu planning

Once you have mastered the microwave techniques of standing, reheating and wrapping to retain heat you will quickly realize the potential for microwave menu planning.

Cooking by microwave is super-quick. But it is no use having one dish ready and on the table while the rest of the meal is still in preparation.

Plan your menus carefully, to make full use of the standing times and 'keep hot' techniques that are an integral part of microwave cooking. They will both help with last-minute meal preparation.

Reheating is another microwave speciality. Not only does this facility make dishes taste as good as they did originally, but also much of their nutritional value will be preserved. This can help your menu planning and certainly simplify the final countdown for a meal from a microwave.



RAY DUNS

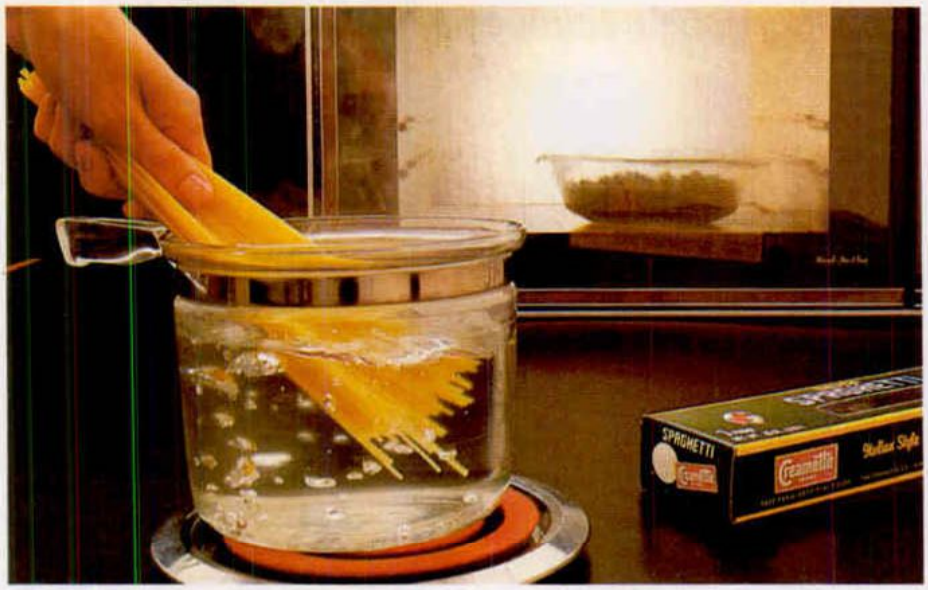
Planning the meal

Like any other meal, a microwave menu should be nutritionally sound, and it should look and taste attractive. The speed with which foods cook is your friend as far as nutrition is concerned — many foods retain more vitamins and minerals when cooked quickly by the microwave than they do when cooked by conventional methods. This is particularly true of vegetables and fruit, which are cooked in a minimum of liquid, so none of the goodness is thrown away. Quick cooking also retains the natural colours and textures of the foods, which all helps towards achieving an appetizing-looking satisfying meal.

Meal planning usually starts with the main protein ingredient. This will be meat, poultry, fish, or perhaps eggs or cheese. Vegetarians may use nuts, beans or grains as their staple ingredient. In many cases the protein ingredients are the most expensive part of the meal — and the cost may largely govern your choice.

Also influencing the choice will be the time available for cooking, plus family preferences. The speed of microwave cooking means you have more variety from day to day without spending more time in the kitchen. This not only prevents monotony in family menu planning but also ensures a healthy and balanced intake of different types of nutrients.

Once the main ingredient is selected, most meals also include vegetables and a starchy element such as potatoes, rice, pasta, bread or pastry — something that will fill those who are more hungry, or can be left off the plate of those with small appetites. If vegetables are cooked in the same dish with the meat, such as in a casserole or spaghetti sauce, it is one more way of reducing cooking time.



Cook *rice or pasta on your conventional cooker while you cook a sauce or an accompanying main dish in the microwave.*

Microwave *a quick dessert in between courses, or thaw a sauce, frozen fruit or a cake in just a few minutes.*

Planning your microwave times

When you are trying to plan a microwaved meal so that all the food will be hot and ready to serve at the right time, there are several factors which you should consider in addition to the actual cooking time of the food.

Standing time

Standing time is part of the cooking process; it is used to complete cooking and tenderize foods. Where standing time is necessary, it is included in the recipe directions. Most commonly, it will be needed for dense foods such as meat, for whole, large vegetables and for large items that cannot be stirred, such as a cake. When planning your meal, take account of standing time and plan to cook the food with the longest standing time first. Quick-cooking foods can be microwaved while denser ones are standing.

Keeping food hot

If properly wrapped or covered, many foods will retain their heat after microwaving is completed. When cooking conventionally, you pop food in a warm oven or place them over a pan of hot water to keep hot. Microwaved foods can be covered with a lid or wrapped in cling film or foil and left at room temperature for a short time while you cook other foods. For example one baked potato takes 7 minutes microwaving time and 5-10 minutes standing time to cook; wrap it tightly in foil or cling film and it will keep hot an additional 45 minutes. You can, therefore, start to microwave your potato any time from 10 minutes to 1 hour before serving, giving you plenty of flexibility in planning other parts of the meal.

The length of time foods will keep hot depends on their size and density. Denser food will hold its heat for longer (see chart overleaf). To lengthen the time food will keep hot, cook it in the serving dish and cover tightly with a lid, foil or cling film when it is removed from the cooker. Count your 'keep hot' time from the end of any standing time mentioned.

Using your conventional cooker

One of the most effective ways of using the microwave is in combination with your conventional cooker. In this way you can cook rice or pasta on the conventional cooker while you microwave a sauce or main dish to go with it. Or fry pancakes while microwaving a savoury or sweet filling.

Cooking ahead

Foods reheated by microwave rarely spoil, so cooking ahead can be a labour saving part of your menu planning. With a conventional cooker, cooking ahead sometimes seems as time consuming as cooking freshly when you need it. But with a microwave, cooking times are so short that a cake or simple dessert can be made quickly between other jobs. If it can be eaten chilled, straight from the refrigerator, so much the better, because this will save you vital time for cooking other dishes in the microwave just before the meal. Simple chilled desserts and appetizers can be prepared on the morning of the meal or, in some cases, even a day ahead.

Another way to save precious minutes is when ingedients need time-consuming preparation — do this well before you start.

Reheating

For casseroles — which often improve in flavour if cooked a day ahead and refrigerated overnight — and other main dishes that are cooked ahead, reheat on 100% (High) straight from the refrigerator. For 2 servings allow 4-6 minutes, for 4-6 servings allow 8-10 minutes. Cover the dish and stir halfway through the time. For large quantities that cannot be stirred, such as 4-6 servings of lasagne; reheat on 50% (Medium), allowing 16-20 minutes. Rotate the dish halfway through and check the food frequently during the second half of the cooking time.

Vegetables are always better freshly cooked, but a single serving can be reheated from the refrigerator on 100% (High) in 1-1½ minutes, 2 servings in 1½-2½ minutes. Cover with greaseproof paper while reheating. Rice, on the other hand, keeps well and it often helps to cook a large quantity ahead of other foods. Reheat one serving from the refrigerator, covered with greaseproof paper, at 100% (High) for 45 seconds, 2 servings for 1½ minutes and 4 for 1⅓ minutes.

Other foods that reheat well include bread rolls: allow about 20 seconds for 4 rolls, wrapping them in absorbent paper. Pancakes, which have to be cooked conventionally, can be reheated from the refrigerator, allowing about 45 seconds for 4 pancakes. Place them on absorbent paper.

Planning your microwave times

Make *dishes like chilled desserts, or cakes to be served at room temperature on the morning of the meal.*

Advance *cooking of foods which reheat easily simplifies meal preparation and improves flavours.*

Long *standing times for large, dense food such as roasted meat or poultry, mean that other dishes can be microwaved in that time.*

Food *which retains heat well can be wrapped in foil while the rest of the meal is cooked. Use the foil shiny side in for heat retention.*

How long food will keep hot

KEEPS HOT 20-45 MINUTES	KEEPS HOT 10-20 MINUTES	KEEPS HOT 3-10 MINUTES
Roast meat weighing over 1.8kg / 4lb	Roast meat weighing 1-1.8kg / 2-4lb	Meat, sliced
Ham	Chicken	Chops and steaks
Turkey	Meatloaf	Fish
Corn on the cob	Casseroles, 2-3 servings	Hamburgers
Potatoes, baked	Rice, 4 servings	Vegetables, sliced
Casseroles, 4-6 servings	Pies, sweet	Bread rolls
	Vegetables, whole	Cakes
	Quiche, whole	Pie, slice
	Lasagne, 4-6 servings	Pizza
	Steamed puddings, whole	Fruit crumble
		Cornish pasties
		Individual meat pies

Teabreads

No longer a time-consuming exercise, you can make a rich-textured, spicy teabread in less than half an hour using your microwave. There's an added bonus — teabreads freeze well too.

Teabreads from the microwave are rich-tasting, moist and make a filling teatime treat. Like any microwave 'baking', you achieve results much faster than with a conventional oven, so you can beat up a mixture and microwave the centre piece for an impromptu tea in just 25 minutes.

Apart from being quick and easy to make, teabreads freeze well, and can also be kept in the refrigerator, wrapped in cling film or foil. With a microwave, you can thaw in minutes teabreads which have been made in advance and stored frozen, so it is well worth preparing them in advance.

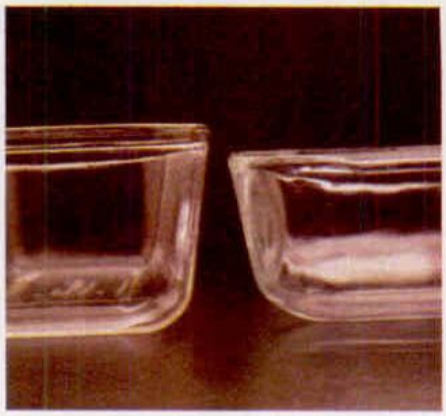
Choose straight-sided loaf dishes or soufflé-style round dishes (each recipe recommends a size of dish). If you have transparent microwave cookware, it is easy to check that the teabread is cooked by looking through the base.

Apple Spice Loaf

JOHN BESELINE

How to microwave teabreads

Chop *up large pieces of fruit or nuts into small pieces before mixing them into a teabread mixture. Before they cook, microwave batters become more liquid, so large lumps will sink.*

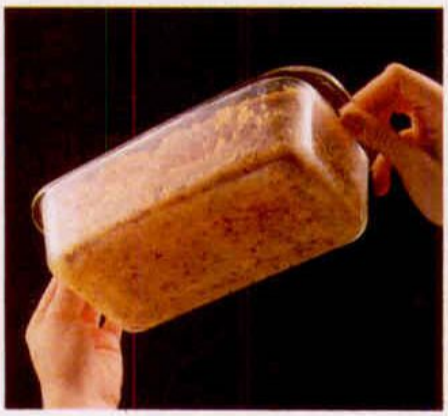


Avoid *using shallow dishes or one with sloping sides for cooking teabreads. For most of the recipes given, a dish measuring 19 × 12.5cm / 7½ × 5in or a round 18cm / 7in dish is ideal.*

Grease *or line dish with greased greaseproof paper or baking parchment. Spread the mixture evenly in the dish. If using a rectangular dish, protect ends with 5cm / 2in wide strips of foil.*

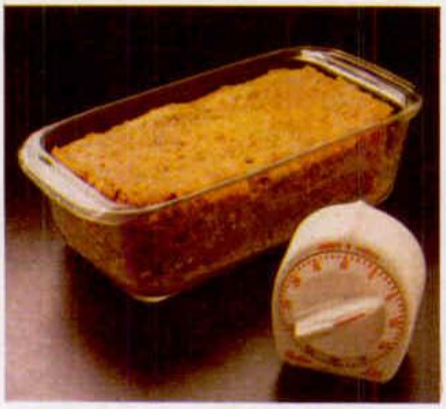
Place *the loaf in its dish on an inverted saucer in the centre of the cooker, microwave at 50% (Medium) for the recommended time, giving the dish ½ turn every 3 minutes for the first part of the cooking time.*

Remove *any foil protection if used, and increase the power to 100% (High), then microwave for 2-8 minutes more, as directed in the recipe, until the teabread is cooked and shrinks from sides.*



Check *the teabread to see if it is cooked by looking through the base of the dish. It is cooked when no unbaked mixture is visible on the bottom of the loaf in the centre. If using a plastic dish, tip out the loaf and press to test.*

Avoid *overcooking teabread. It is best to keep checking the base, rather than let it cook too much. This occurs on the inside of the loaf where it is not immediately visible.*



Remove *the teabread from the cooker and leave to stand for 10 minutes. Loosen the edges, then turn the cooked teabread out onto a wire rack to cool completely.*

Remove *the lining piece of greased greaseproof paper from the teabread. Allow it to cool completely before cutting in thin slices for serving. (Freeze or store once cool).*

Apple spice loaf

12 mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

150g / 5oz plain flour
175g / 6oz caster sugar
5ml / 1tsp bicarbonate of soda
5ml / 1tsp salt
5ml / 1tsp ground cinnamon
1.5ml / ¼tsp grated nutmeg
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground cloves
50ml / 2fl oz vegetable oil
175g / 6oz sweetened apple purée
100g / 4oz raisins (optional)
2 eggs
50ml / 2tsp lemon juice
apple slices dipped in lemon juice to decorate

MAKES A 19 × 12.5cm / 7½ × 5in LOAF

1 Mix all the ingredients in a large mixing bowl using an electric mixer at low speed until smooth.
2 Line the base of the dish with greased greaseproof paper or baking parchment and spread the mixture evenly over it. Protect the ends of the loaf (see opposite) so that the ends of the loaf are protected.
3 Place the dish on an inverted saucer in the centre of the cooker and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 9 minutes, giving the dish ¼ turn every 2 minutes.
4 Increase the power to 100% (High) and microwave for 3-5 minutes. Remove the foil after 2 minutes and give the dish ¼ turn every 2 minutes until it is cooked.
5 The teabread is cooked when no uncooked mixture is visible through the bottom of the dish.
6 Leave to stand for 5-10 minutes. Loosen the sides of the teabread before turning out onto a wire rack to cool. Top with apple slices before serving.

Microtips

If the loaf seems to be uncooked in the centre, return it to the dish and place on an inverted saucer in the cooker. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes. It is always easier to remedy an undercooked dish, rather than spoil it through overcooking.

Apple Spice Loaf (top) and Date Nut Teabread

Date nut teabread

10 mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

175g / 6oz dates, halved
5ml / 1tsp bicarbonate of soda
175g / 6oz soft brown sugar
grated zest of 1 large orange
50ml / 2fl oz vegetable oil
1 egg
175g / 6oz plain flour
5ml / 1tsp salt
50g / 2oz chopped nuts

MAKES AN 18cm / 7in ROUND LOAF

1 Mix the dates, bicarbonate of soda and 175ml / 6fl oz boiling water in a bowl and leave to stand for 10 minutes.
2 Mix the sugar, orange zest, oil and egg together until smooth and add the date mixture. Gradually stir in the flour, salt and nuts.
3 Line the base of the dish with greased greaseproof paper or baking parchment and spread the mixture evenly over it.
4 Place the dish on an inverted saucer in the centre of the cooker and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 8 minutes, giving the dish a ¼ turn every 2 minutes. Increase the power to 100% (High). Microwave for 2-6 minutes. The loaf is cooked when no uncooked mixture is visible through the base of the dish.
5 Leave to stand for 5-10 minutes. Loosen the sides of the teabread before turning out onto a wire rack to cool.

Note: If preferred cook this in a 19 × 12.5cm / 7½ × 5in dish but remember to protect the ends of the loaf with foil at first.

Carrot loaf

11 mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

85g / 3½oz plain flour
175g / 6oz caster sugar
5ml / 1tsp baking powder
5ml / 1tsp bicarbonate of soda
5ml / 1tsp salt
10ml / 2tsp ground cinnamon
125ml / 4fl oz vegetable oil
2 eggs
50g / 2oz chopped nuts (optional)
175g / 6oz carrot, finely grated

MAKES A 19 × 12.5cm / 7½ × 5in LOAF

1 Mix all the ingredients together in a large bowl using an electric mixer at low speed, then beat at medium speed until smooth.
2 Line the base of the loaf dish with greased greaseproof paper or baking parchment and spread the mixture evenly in the dish. Protect the ends of the loaf with 5cm / 2in wide strips of foil, so that 2.5cm / 1 n each end is covered and the rest is moulded around the end of the dish.
3 Place the dish on an inverted saucer in the middle of the cooker and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 9 minutes, giving the dish ¼ turn every 3 minutes.
4 Remove the foil and increase the power to 100% (High). Microwave for 2-3 minutes. If using a clear glass dish, check to see if the teabread is cooked by looking through the bottom. It is done when no uncooked mixture is visible on the bottom. Leave to stand for 5-10 minutes, then turn out to cool on a wire rack.

Country raisin bread

10 mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

75g / 3oz raisins
5ml / 1tsp bicarbonate of soda
175g / 6oz soft light brown sugar
grated zest of 1 large orange
50ml / 2fl oz vegetable oil
1 egg
175g / 6oz plain flour
salt
5ml / 1tsp ground cinnamon
2.5ml / ½tsp grated nutmeg
pinch of ground cloves

MAKES AN 18cm / 7in ROUND LOAF

1 Mix the raisins, bicarbonate of soda and 175ml / 6fl oz boiling water in a bowl and leave to stand for 10 minutes until the raisins have plumped up.
2 Mix the sugar, orange zest, oil and egg together until smooth and add the raisin mixture. Gradually stir in the remaining ingredients.
3 Line base of dish with a circle of greased greaseproof paper or baking parchment to fit, then spread the mixture evenly over it.
4 Place the dish on an inverted saucer in the centre of the cooker and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 8 minutes, giving the dish ¼ turn every 2 minutes. Increase the power to 100% (High) and microwave for 2-6 minutes or until it is cooked.
5 The loaf is cooked when no uncooked mixture is visible through the base of the dish.
6 Leave to stand for 5-10 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack to cool.

RAY DUNS

Left: *Carrot Cake*
Middle top: *Country Raisin Bread*
Middle bottom: *Brown Crumb Loaf*
Right: *Wholemeal Banana Bread*

Microtips

When making teabreads, it is easier to tell if the loaf is cooked if you use a glass dish. If using a non-transparent dish, tip the loaf out and press to check if it is cooked underneath. Return to the cooker if necessary.

Brown crumb loaf

5 mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

75g / 3oz plain flour
75g / 3oz wheatmeal biscuit crumbs
5ml / 1tsp bicarbonate of soda
salt
175ml / 6fl oz milk
50ml / 2fl oz black treacle
50ml / 2fl oz oil
75g / 3oz raisins

MAKES AN 18cm / 7in ROUND LOAF

1 Place all ingredients but the raisins in a mixing bowl and blend using an electric mixer until smooth. Stir in raisins.
2 Line the base of a 18cm / 7in round dish with a circle of greased greaseproof paper or baking parchment. Pour the mixture into the prepared dish and cover with a piece of cling film rolled back at one edge.
3 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 5-7 minutes, or until the top springs back when pressed lightly and no unbaked mixture is visible at the bottom. Give the loaf ½ turn every 3 minutes during cooking.
4 Leave the teabread to stand for 5-10 minutes in the dish before turning onto wire rack to cool.
5 To serve the loaf warm, reheat slices on a plate, covered loosely with cling film. Microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds, then serve at once.

Wholemeal banana bread

13 mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

85g / 3½oz wholemeal flour
50g / 2oz plain flour
175g / 6oz caster sugar
150ml / ¼pt vegetable oil
75ml / 3fl oz milk
2 eggs
2 very ripe bananas, sliced
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
5ml / 1tsp bicarbonate of soda
salt
50g / 2oz chopped nuts

STREUSEL TOPPING
50g / 2oz flour
50g / 2oz soft light brown sugar
generous pinch of ground cinnamon
25g / 1oz butter

MAKES A 19 × 12.5cm / 7½ × 5in LOAF

1 First prepare the topping. Mix all the ingredients together and rub into fine breadcrumbs using the fingertips. Set aside.
2 Place the teabread ingredients in a large mixing bowl and beat at low speed using an electric mixer for about 15 seconds until smooth.
3 Line the base of the baking dish with greased greaseproof paper or baking parchment. Spread the mixture evenly in the dish and sprinkle the streusel mixture over the top. Protect the ends of the teabread with two 5cm / 2in wide strips of foil. Mould 2.5cm / 1in around the rim of the dish, leaving 2.5cm / 1in of the loaf protected at each end.
4 Place the dish on an inverted saucer in the centre of the cooker. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 9 minutes. Increase the power to 100% (High) and microwave for 4-7 minutes. Remove the foil after 2 minutes and give the dish ¼ turn every 2 minutes.
5 If using a clear glass dish, test to see if the teabread is cooked by looking at the bottom of the loaf. It is cooked when no uncooked mixture is visible on the base.
6 Remove from the cooker and leave to stand for 5-10 minutes before turning out onto a wire rack and removing the paper.

VARIATIONS
Basic banana bread: substitute plain white flour for the wholemeal flour.

Holiday banana bread: stir 100g / 4oz chopped mixed peel into the mixture before putting it into the dish. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-3 minutes longer.

Microtips

You can decorate any teabread with a layer of chopped glacé fruit and nuts. Make a glaze by mixing 100g / 4oz sugar with the juice of 1 lemon, made up to 150ml / ¼pt with water, in a bowl. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4-6 minutes, until the mixture makes a syrup. While the syrup is still hot, pour it evenly over the fruit mixture on the teabread, then leave to stand for about 30 minutes until cool. (It will also mean the teabread can be stored for 4-5 days.)

Freezer notes

To freeze teabreads, wrap them thoroughly in foil or cling film. It is a good idea to freeze individual slices of teabread for use in packed lunches — take them straight from the freezer in the morning, and they will thaw of their own accord by the time you are ready to eat them.

Greens

Colour, flavour and goodness are guaranteed when you cook greens in the microwave. With just a little water and a few minutes' cooking, you will have perfect vegetables every time.

Some greens are delicate in flavour while others taste more piquant. But whichever you use, they should be microwaved briefly to ensure that they retain nutrients and character.

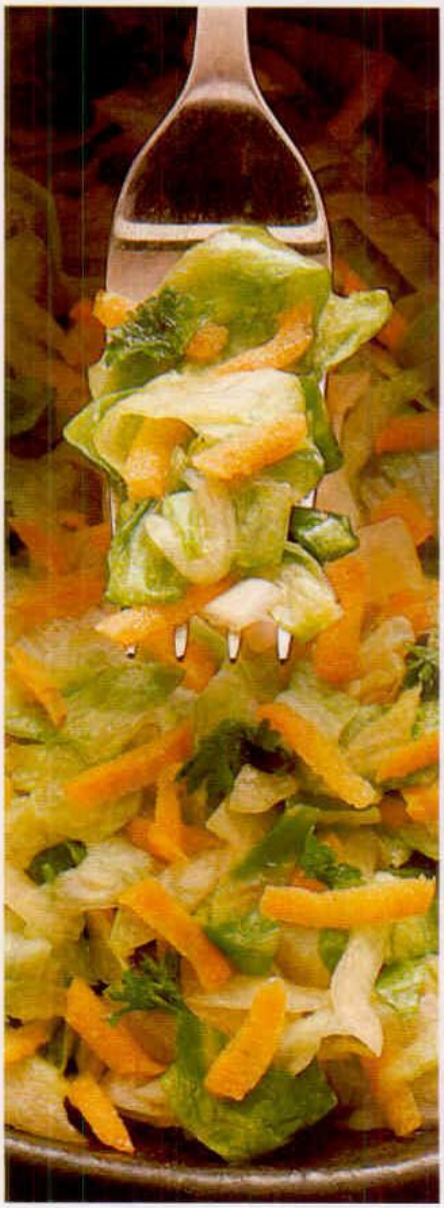
Use your microwave as often as possible to cook greens if you want to get the maximum amount of goodness from them. The microwave makes an important contribution to healthy eating when it comes to vegetable cooking, which is also an added bonus of cooking with your microwave.

How to select and store greens

Choose greens of any type which are clean and crisp. Avoid dry or wilted leaves, coarse stems or veins. Spinach should be deep green with either curly or flat leaves. Select kale and spring greens which are green and bright. Small, yellow leaves are edible but large ones should be discarded. Avoid woody or flabby stems. Chard should have small, dark green leaves and firm, white stalks. Look for cabbage heads which are solid and feel heavy for their size with undamaged leaves.

Pack unwashed greens loosely in a plastic bag or covered container to prevent drying. Store in the refrigerator and use promptly.

Left to right: *Sweet-sour Spinach, Braised Cabbage, Greens with Bacon.*



Sweet-sour spinach

11½ mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb spinach
50g / 2oz rindless streaky bacon, chopped
15ml / 1tbls plain flour
15ml / 1tbls brown sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp mustard powder
salt and pepper
125ml / 4fl oz creamy milk
15ml / 1tbls cider vinegar

SERVES 4

1 Wash the spinach well in cold water, shake out the excess water and chop or shred into pieces. Then cook the spinach as directed in the chart, right. Drain well and put to one side.
2 Microwave the bacon in a 2L / 3½pt covered casserole at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes or until cooked. Drain off all but 15ml/ 1tbls of the cooking juices.
3 Blend in the flour, sugar, mustard, salt, pepper and milk, mixing until the flour is completely incorporated. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes, stirring once during the cooking time.
4 Then stir in the vinegar and spinach, and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes.

Braised cabbage

9 mins

Standing time: 2 mins

350g / 12oz cabbage, finely shredded
65ml / 2½fl oz boiling water
½ vegetable stock cube
1 carrot, coarsely grated
½ small onion, finely chopped
15g / ½oz butter
2.5ml / ½tsp dried parsley
salt and pepper

SERVES 4

1 Pour the hot water onto the stock cube in a 2L / 3½pt casserole. Stir until the stock cube has completely dissolved.
2 Stir all the remaining ingredients into the container and cover with a lid or cling film rolled back at one edge to allow steam to escape. Microwave at 100% (High) for 9-11 minutes, stirring once during the cooking time. Leave to stand for 2 minutes; serve.

Greens with bacon

9½ mins

Standing time: 2 mins

Greens and bacon are an excellent combination, which you will find even more flavourful when cooked in the microwave.

50g / 2oz rindless streaky bacon, chopped
1 small onion, finely chopped
450g / 1lb spring greens or cabbage
salt and pepper
pinch of nutmeg

SERVES 4

1 In a 2.8L / 5pt casserole, combine the bacon with the onion. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge, and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-5 minutes, or until the bacon is cooked, stirring half way through the cooking time.
2 Discard any thick stems or stalks, then shred the greens or cabbage finely. Stir them into the onion and bacon and mix well.
3 Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave as directed in the chart below, until the greens are tender but crisp; stir once during the cooking time. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg to taste. Let stand 2 minutes.

Microwave times for greens

TYPE	QUANTITY	MICROWAVE TIME AT 100% (HIGH)	PROCEDURE
Cabbage	450 / 1lb	9-11 minutes	Discard thick stalk; shred. Place in a 2.8L / 5pt casserole with 60ml / 2½fl oz water; cover. Let stand 2 minutes. Serve tossed in butter and nutmeg.
Curly kale	450g / 1lb	15-17 minutes	Discard thick stalk and stems; shred. Place in a 2.8L / 5pt casserole with 150ml / 5fl oz water; cover. Stir every 5 minutes. Let stand 2 minutes. Drain; season.
Spinach Fresh	450g / 1lb	6-8 minutes	Chop or shred. Place in a covered 2.8L / 5pt casserole. Stir once. Stand 2 minutes. Drain.
Frozen (chopped or leaf)	275g / 10oz	7-9 minutes	Place in a covered 1.4L / 2½pt casserole. Stir to break up during cooking.
Spring greens	450g / 1lb	6½-8½ minutes	Discard stalk; shred Place in a 2.8L / 5pt casserole with 30ml / 2tbls water; cover. Stir once. Stand 2 minutes. Drain; season.
Swiss chard	450g / 1lb	5½-6½ minutes	Discard thick stalk; shred. Place in a 2.8L / 5pt casserole with 150ml / 5fl oz water; cover. Stir every 3 minutes. Let stand 2 minutes. Drain, add salt to taste.

Spinach soup

16 mins

Standing time: none

This is a hearty, meal-in-itself soup. The contrast of the spinach with the creamy sauce is particularly good.

275g / 10oz packet frozen chopped spinach
1 small onion, finely chopped
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
40g / 1½oz plain flour
2 chicken or vegetable stock cubes
850ml / 1½pt milk
salt and pepper
pinch of grated nutmeg
65ml / 2½fl oz soured cream (optional)
15-30ml / 1-2tbls snipped chives (optional)

SERVES 4-6

1 Make a small hole in the packet of frozen spinach and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-5 minutes. Shake once or twice; drain well.
2 In a 2L / 3½pt bowl, microwave the onion and butter together at 100% (High) for 1-1½ minutes, or until the onion is just tender.
3 Mix the flour into the onion and butter mixture until completely incorporated, then mash in the stock cubes and finally blend in the milk. Stir the mixture until smooth.
4 Stir in the spinach, then microwave at 100% (High) for 12-15 minutes until the soup is thick and creamy, stirring after the first 5 minutes and then every 2-3 minutes. Season to taste with salt, pepper and grated nutmeg.
5 If liked, when serving the soup, top with soured cream and 5ml / 1tsp snipped chives to decorate.

VARIATION

Creamy spinach soup: If preferred, the finished dish can be puréed in a blender or food processor. Toast 2 slices of brown bread, cube and scatter over each bowl.

Swiss chard and mushrooms

9 mins

Standing time: 2 mins

450g / 1lb chard or spring greens*
1 onion, finely chopped
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
295g / 10.4oz can condensed cream of mushroom soup
175g / 6oz mushrooms, sliced
65ml / 2½fl oz soured cream
2.5ml / ½tsp soy sauce (optional)
salt and pepper
25g / 1oz toasted almonds

SERVES 4-6

1 Cook the chard or spring greens as directed in the chart, page 187; drain. In a 1.1L / 2pt casserole, microwave the onion and butter at 100% (High) for 1½ minutes.
2 Stir in the drained vegetable and remaining ingredients except almonds. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes, stirring once. Leave to stand for 2 minutes. Garnish with toasted almonds.

**In Australia, substitute spinach for spring greens.*

Cook's notes

Greens are very nutritious vegetables, containing plenty of vitamins. Consequently, microwaving is the best form of cooking, as all the goodness is retained. However, the microwave cannot work wonders on tough, old vegetables, so take care when selecting greens.

Preparation is also important. Cut out thick stalks or stems and discard any damaged outside leaves. Wash the leaves in cold water and shake out the excess well. Then chop or shred the leaves coarsely before cooking as directed in the chart, page 187. Season after cooking and serve with butter.

Crustless Ricotta pie

12 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

Spinach has a distinctive flavour which is perfectly complemented by the cheese and eggs in this dish. It can be served as a light starter or snack, or as an accompaniment to beef or lamb dishes.

225g / 8oz spinach
1 onion, chopped
2 eggs
225g / 8oz Ricotta cheese
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt (optional)
1.5ml / ¼tsp pepper
1.5ml / ¼sp nutmeg
10ml / 2tsp plain flour
large pinch of paprika.

SERVES 6

1 Wash, then chop or shred spinach. Combine the spinach and onion in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole and cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5-6 minutes, stirring once. Drain well.
2 In a medium mixing bowl, beat the eggs with a fork. Stir in the Ricotta, salt, if using, pepper, nutmeg and flour. Blend in the spinach and onion. Spread the spinach mixture in a 23cm / 9in pie plate with a rubber spatula. Sprinkle over the paprika.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes, rotating after 2 minutes. Reduce the power to 50% (Medium). Microwave for 3 minutes longer, or until the centre is set. Let stand for 5 minutes.

VARIATION
Substitute 275g / 10oz packet frozen chopped spinach for the fresh if preferred. Empty the spinach straight into the casserole with the onion; microwave at 100% (High) for 4-6 minutes, stirring once. Continue as directed.

Cook's notes

Vegetables cooked in a microwave retain their texture and more of their nutrients than when cooked conventionally in more water.

Cheesy spring greens

3½ mins

Standing time: 2 minutes

30ml / 2tbls olive or vegetable oil
1 garlic clove, crushed
350g / 12oz spring greens*, shredded, washed and well drained
5ml / 1tsp sesame seeds
25g / 1oz mature Cheddar or Parmesan cheese, grated
salt and pepper

SERVES 4

1 Combine the oil and garlic in a casserole and microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute.
2 Quickly stir in the greens and sesame, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes, stirring once; let stand for 2 minutes. Drain.
3 Stir two-thirds of the cheese into the hot spring greens and season to taste. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30 seconds. Sprinkle over the remaining grated cheese.

**In Australia substitute spinach.*

Microtips

Substitute kale for spring greens, if preferred and microwave at 100% (High) for 7-9 minutes. Let stand for 2 minutes before serving. To make a delicious main-course snack for 2-3, simply add more cheese.

Using frozen prawns

A packet of frozen prawns in the freezer can give you a delicious meal in minutes. Thaw them in your microwave, then combine with simple ingredients for tasty dishes.

Prawns inhabit inshore waters throughout the world and are grey or almost transparent before cooking and acquire their familiar pink colour only when cooked.

A cooked prawn is a healthy pink colour, as seen on the fishmonger's slab (a few top fishmongers, freezer centres and Chinese supermarkets do sell raw prawns).

Top quality prawns are frozen in the shell, which helps to keep the flesh moist and particularly delicious to eat. (The heads and shells can be used to flavour sauces and soups.) However, ready-peeled prawns are far more convenient to use, and in many dishes the difference is not noticeable.

Always thaw prawns, then microwave immediately. You will find hardly any fishy smell escapes during cooking. For hot dishes, microwaving times will depend on the recipe; beware not to overcook, as this will makes prawns tough.

Saucy Prawns

How to thaw prawns

To thaw *less than 450g / 1lb frozen prawns: arrange in a single layer in a shallow dish, cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 1-2 minutes.*

To thaw *450g / 1lb prawns in a plastic pack: Leave prawns in the pack (provided it is not made of foil) and roll back the corner of the lid. Microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 3 minutes.*

Break *up any frozen lumps as soon as possible and stir prawns gently, pushing the outside prawns to the centre of the dish, and those in the centre to the outside of the dish.*

Microwave *at 20-30% (Defrost) for 1-2 minutes for less than 450 / 1lb; 3 minutes for 450 / 1lb. Prawns should be soft in centre but still cold.*

Drain *the prawns well on absorbent paper and cook them immediatetly (see recipes) or serve them quickly, if eating cold. Peel if necessary.*

Microtips

You can freeze prawns which have been cooked in their shells. You may have been lucky enough to catch your own or simply have bought in bulk from the fishmonger. Provided they have been well drained before freezing, whole prawns should remain loose when frozen. Microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 3-4 minutes, rearranging the prawns once to bring inside prawns to the outside. Stand for 2-3 minutes.

Prawns in butter sauce

8½ mins

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz butter
75ml / 3fl oz white wine
30ml / 2tbls lemon juice
15ml / 1tbls sugar
15ml / 1tbls cornflour
5ml / 1tsp snipped chives
450g / 1lb frozen peeled prawns, thawed (see page 191)

SERVES 4

1 In a 1.4L / 2½pt casserole, melt the butter at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds. Stir in all the ingredients except the prawns. Cook for 2 minutes at 100% (High).

2 Stir in the prawns, cover with absorbent paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 6 minutes. Stir after 3 minutes. Serve with rice.

Pickled prawns

6 mins

Standing time: none

150ml / ¼pt beer
1 bay leaf
7.5ml / 1½tsp whole pickling spice
1 small onion, thinly sliced
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
225g / 8oz frozen peeled prawns, thawed (see page 191)

SERVES 2

1 Combine all the ingredients except the prawns in a 1.4L / 2½pt casserole. Cover with cling film, rolled back at one edge.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes or until boiling.
3 Stir in the prawns, cover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 3-4 minutes. Stir after 2 minutes. Cool then chill before serving. Discard the pickling spice and serve with crusty bread.

Prawns and spinach

43½ mins

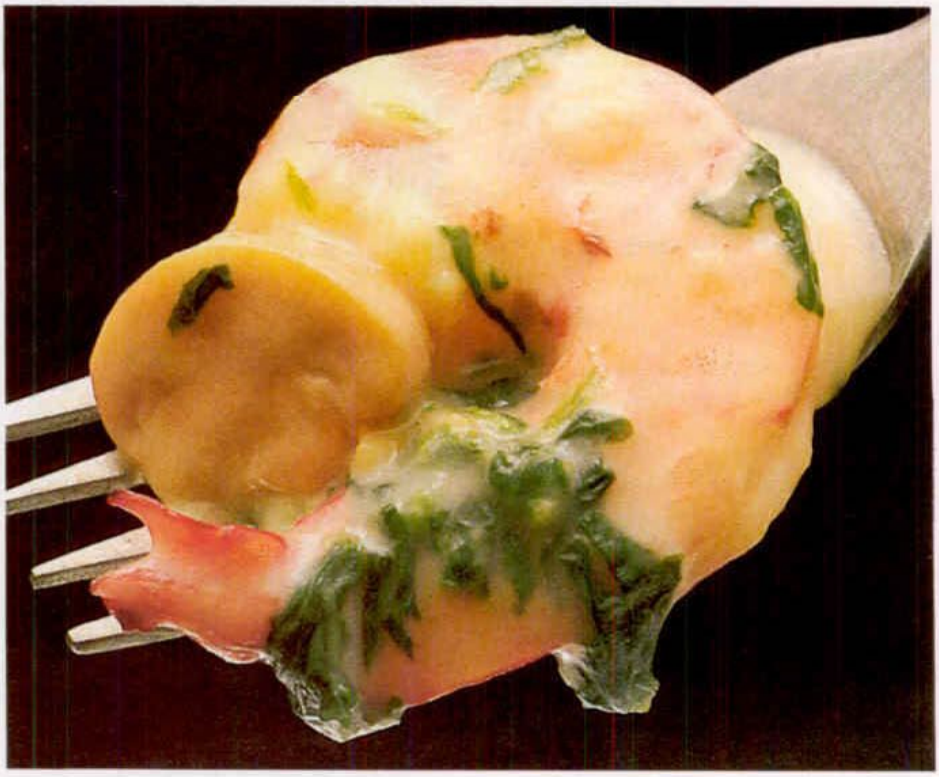
Standing time: 5 mins

100g / 4oz Cheddar cheese, grated
150g / 5oz button mushrooms, cooked and sliced
45ml / 3tbls dry sherry
salt and pepper
450g / 1lb frozen peeled prawns, thawed (see page 191)
15g / ½oz butter
45ml / 3tbls seasoned fresh breadcrumbs
10ml / 2tsp dried parsley
pinch of paprika
900g / 2lb packet frozen chopped spinach

WHITE SAUCE
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
25g / 1oz plain flour
275ml / ½pt milk

SERVES 4-6

1 First prepare the white sauce. Put the butter in a 575ml / 1pt jug and microwave at 100% (High) for 20 seconds until just melted. Stir in the flour and then blend in the milk until smooth. Microwave at 100% (High) for about 5 minutes, stirring every 1½ minutes until sauce is thick and smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
2 In a medium-sized bowl, mix together the white sauce, cheese, mushrooms, sherry, salt, pepper and prawns.
3 Place the butter in a small bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds. Stir in the breadcrumbs, parsley and paprika.
4 Make a small hole in the packet of frozen spinach and place in the cooker. Microwave at 100% (High) for about 12 minutes or until warm. Shake the packet once or twice during heating. Drain the liquid from the spinach, pressing well.
5 Turn the prawn mixture into a casserole and cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 30% (Low) for 12-16 minutes. Stir gently every 5 minutes.
6 Spread the spinach over the base of a shallow 25 × 20cm / 10 × 8in dish. Spoon the prawn mixture evenly over the top and cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
7 Gently rearrange the prawns, re-cover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 9-12 minutes, or until the prawns are heated through. Cover and leave to stand for 5 minutes before serving.



Above: *Pickled Prawns*
Right: *Prawns and Spinach*

Prawn and rice medley

27¼ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

This delicious concoction would make an excellent party dish.

25g / 1oz butter
25g / 1oz fresh brown breadcrumbs
275g / 10oz packet frozen rice * with peas and mushrooms
170g / 6oz packet long-grain rice with wild rice *
298g / 10½oz can crab bisque
575ml / 1pt hot water
350g / 12oz frozen peeled prawns, thawed (see page 191)

SERVES 4

1 Place the butter in a small bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds or until melted. Stir in the breadcrumbs and set aside.
2 Make a small hole in the frozen rice packet and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until warm.
3 Combine the long-grain and wild rice, soup and water in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 10 minutes.
4 Stir in the heated rice, then cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 10 minutes. Stir in the prawns, re-cover and microwave for a further 4 minutes at 100% (High).
5 Stand for 5 minutes. Serve sprinkled with reserved breadcrumbs.

** In Australia, use cooked rice.*
** In Australia, use long grain rice.*

Microtips

If you have a quantity of left-over cooked rice, use it in place of the bag of vegetable rice. Use 200g / 7oz rice to 75g / 3oz cooked diced mixed vegetables. Mix them together in an 850ml / 1½pt casserole with 15ml / 1tbls water. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge, and microwave at 70% (Medium-High) for 2½-3 minutes or until heated through. Use this rice for the recipe in the same way as the frozen rice with vegetables.

Saucy prawns

7 mins

Standing time: none

1 small green pepper, seeded and chopped
1 small onion, chopped
225g / 8oz jar tomato sauce
large pinch of garlic salt
450g / 1lb frozen peeled prawns, thawed (see page 191)
boiled rice, to serve
lemon twists, to garnish

SERVES 4

1 Mix the pepper and onion in a 1.7L 3pt casserole and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes, until slightly softened.
2 Add the tomato sauce, garlic salt and prawns. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5-7 minutes, stirring once during cooking and on removal from the cooker, to ensure the heat has been evenly distributed. Serve with boiled rice and garnish with lemon twists.

Spring chicken dinner

Entertain in style with this delicious dinner, featuring succulent young chickens, crunchy courgette salad and fresh peach Melba. It's all so easy to prepare with your microwave — so relax and enjoy it!

Make the most of tender young chickens which cook to perfection in the microwave. The menu features these tasty birds, with an unusual Brazil nut stuffing. Start the meal with crunchy courgette salads flavoured with sesame seeds. They can be prepared early in the day, leaving you free to entertain your guests while the chickens cook.

The vegetables may also be prepared during the morning, then need only a few minutes' microwaving. Serve with hot bread rolls.

Finish the meal with a refreshing peach Melba. Prepare the peaches in advance; warm the raspberry sauce while you fill the peaches with the ice cream.

Stuffed Spring Chickens with Courgette Salads, Peas and Mushrooms and Peach Melba.

Individual courgette salads

8 mins

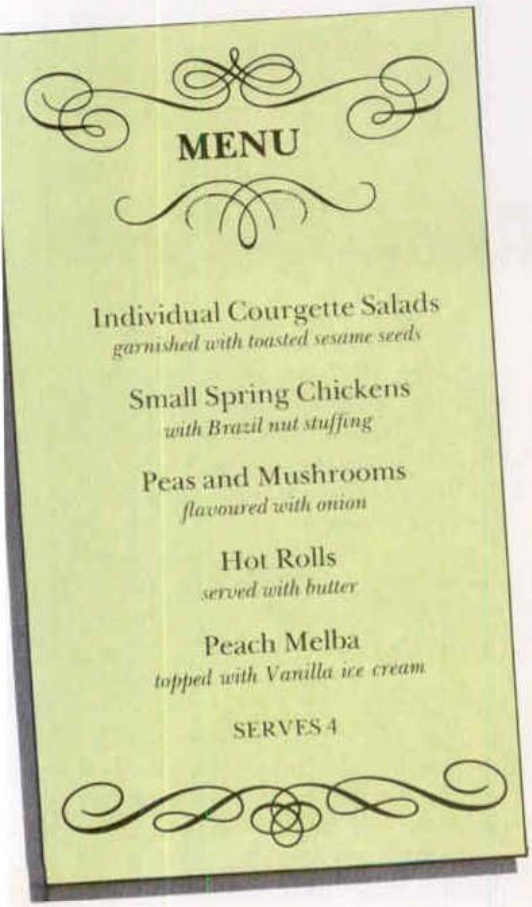
Standing time: none

45ml / 3tbls lemon juice
90ml / 6tbls vegetable oil or corn oil
1 garlic clove, crushed
salt and pepper
15ml / 1tbls sesame seeds, toasted
450g / 1lb fresh or frozen courgettes, sliced
4 lettuce leaves

SERVES 4

1 Combine the lemon juice, oil, garlic, salt and pepper in a screw-topped jar. Shake well.
2 Place the sliced courgettes in a bowl, cover with the cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes, until tender, stirring once or twice. Cool slightly.
3 Stir 75ml / 5tbls of the dressing into the warm courgettes. Cover and set aside until cold.
4 Arrange the lettuce leaves as flower-like cups in individual bowls, or shred them and make a bed of lettuce in each dish. Top with the courgette salad. Cover the salads with cling film and refrigerate until required.
5 Just before serving, sprinkle over the remaining dressing and the toasted sesame seeds.

VARIATION
Add a touch of colour to the salads by scattering over some finely chopped red pepper or peeled, chopped tomatoes just before serving.



Stuffed spring chickens

17½ mins

Standing time: 10 mins

50g / 2oz celery, finely chopped
1 small onion, finely chopped
65g / 2½oz butter or margarine
50g / 2oz fresh brown breadcrumbs
50g / 2oz Brazil nuts, very finely chopped
2.5ml / ½tsp dried mixed herbs
15ml / 1tbls water
salt and pepper
2 spring chickens, about 675g /1½lb each
30ml / 1tbls soy sauce

SERVES 4

1 Combine the celery, onion and 25g / 1oz butter in a small bowl. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes, until the vegetables are tender
2 Stir in the breadcrumbs, Brazil nuts, dried herbs and water. Season to taste with salt and pepper, then stuff the chickens with the mixture.
3 Microwave the remaining butter in a cup for 30-40 seconds, or until melted. Stir in the soy sauce.
4 Brush the chickens all over with the butter mixture, then place them, breast down, on a roasting rack set in a roasting bag.
5 Fasten the bag loosely, pierce it, then microwave the chickens at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes.
6 Turn the birds over and microwave for a further 8-10 minutes, until the juices run clear and the legs move easily. Rotate the dish once during cooking.
7 Remove the chickens from the bag, cover with foil and stand for 10 minutes before serving.

VARIATION
If spring chickens are difficult to find, use 4 single or 3 double-sized poussins with a total weight of 1.4kg / 3lb. The cooking time will be the same, but you may need to use 2 large roasting bags to hold the poussins.

If you have no roasting racks, use an upside-down saucer under each chicken as a substitute.

Countdown

Early on the day
Cook the courgettes. Prepare the dressing and stir it into the courgettes. Chill. Prepare the Brazil nut stuffing, stuff the chickens and place them in a roasting bag or dish. Refrigerate until required. Microwave the onion for the vegetables and and combine it with the peas and mushrooms in a serving dish. Cover and refrigerate. Arrange peaches in a dish and microwave until soft. Cover and chill.

20 minutes before serving
Cook the chickens, then cover them with foil or a tea towel to hold in the heat while the first course is being eaten.

Just before serving
Microwave the vegetables. Sprinkle the remaining dressing over the salads.

Before serving the main course
Warm the rolls through for about 20 seconds.

Before serving the dessert
Heat the jam while filling the peach halves with ice cream.

Peas and mushrooms

7 mins

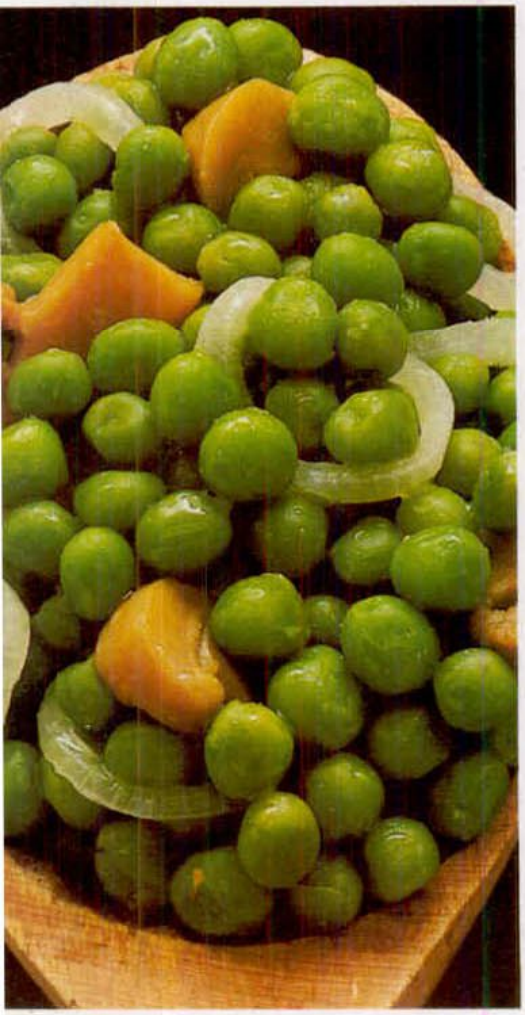
Standing time: 2 mins

1 small onion, thinly sliced
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
225g / 8oz mushrooms, sliced
275g / 10oz frozen peas
salt and pepper

SERVES 4

1 Place the onion and butter in a 1.1L / 2pt bowl. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes, until onion is tender. Add the mushrooms and cook for a further 2 minutes.
2 Stir in the peas and season to taste. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 6-8 minutes until hot and cooked through; stir halfway through. Leave to stand for 2 minutes before serving.

Peas and Mushrooms



Peach Melba

2½ mins

Standing time: none

4 fresh peaches, peeled, halved and stoned
lemon juice
90ml / 6tbls raspberry jam
4 scoops vanilla ice cream
sweet, crisp biscuits, to serve

SERVES 4

1 Arrange the peach halves in a shallow dish and brush with lemon juice. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-6 minutes, until peaches are soft, rearrange after half the time. Chill until needed.

Peach Melba

2 Place the jam in a jug and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds, stirring once, until it becomes hot and syrupy.
3 Cut each peach half in two and arrange 4 quarters like a flower in 4 serving glasses. Fill each peach flower with a scoop of ice cream. Serve at once, handing the hot raspberry jam separately.

VARIATION
Use 8 canned peach halves instead of fresh peaches. Drain well, arrange in a shallow dish, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute, until warm. Halve the peaches and continue as above.

Speedy steaks

Quick-fry steaks are an excellent and economical buy and can be made into many tasty and substantial meals, using the microwave.

There's no doubt a steak meal is a great favourite with many people, so why not make the most of less expensive pre-tenderized steaks widely available in supermarkets and butcher's shops. These thin quick-cooking steaks are an excellent buy and can be made into many tasty dishes.

When selecting these steaks, look out for any which are lightly marbled with fat as this gives flavour and also helps keep the steak moist and tender during cooking. If necessary trim off large pieces of fat and cut any remaining smaller portions at intervals to prevent it curling up during cooking and spoiling the appearance.

Steaks will shrink less and retain more juices when microwaved. If you're unsure whether steaks are cooked sufficiently, cut a small slit in one to check — it can then be returned to the microwave for a few seconds to finish off the cooking if necessary.

Piquant steaks

RAY DUNS

Steak braise

25 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

450g / 1lb potatoes, sliced
225g / 8oz carrots, thinly sliced
275g / 10oz can beef and vegetable soup
4 quick-frying steaks, (weighing 450-700g / 1-1½lb
1 × 40g / 1½oz pkt onion soup

SERVES 4

1 In a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in dish, combine potatoes, carrots and soup. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 10-12 minutes; stir once.

2 Arrange the steaks over the potatoes and carrots. Sprinkle with the onion soup mix. Cover with greaseproof paper and microwave for 5 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium); rearrange steaks, cover and microwave for 10-12 minutes, turning and arranging steaks once. Stand for 3 minutes.

Cook's notes

A golden brown appearance to a plain steak can be achieved by 'flashing' the microwaved steaks under a hot grill for a few moments before serving.

RAYDUNS

Above: *Steak Braise*

Below: *Steak Medley*

Swiss steaks

16 mins

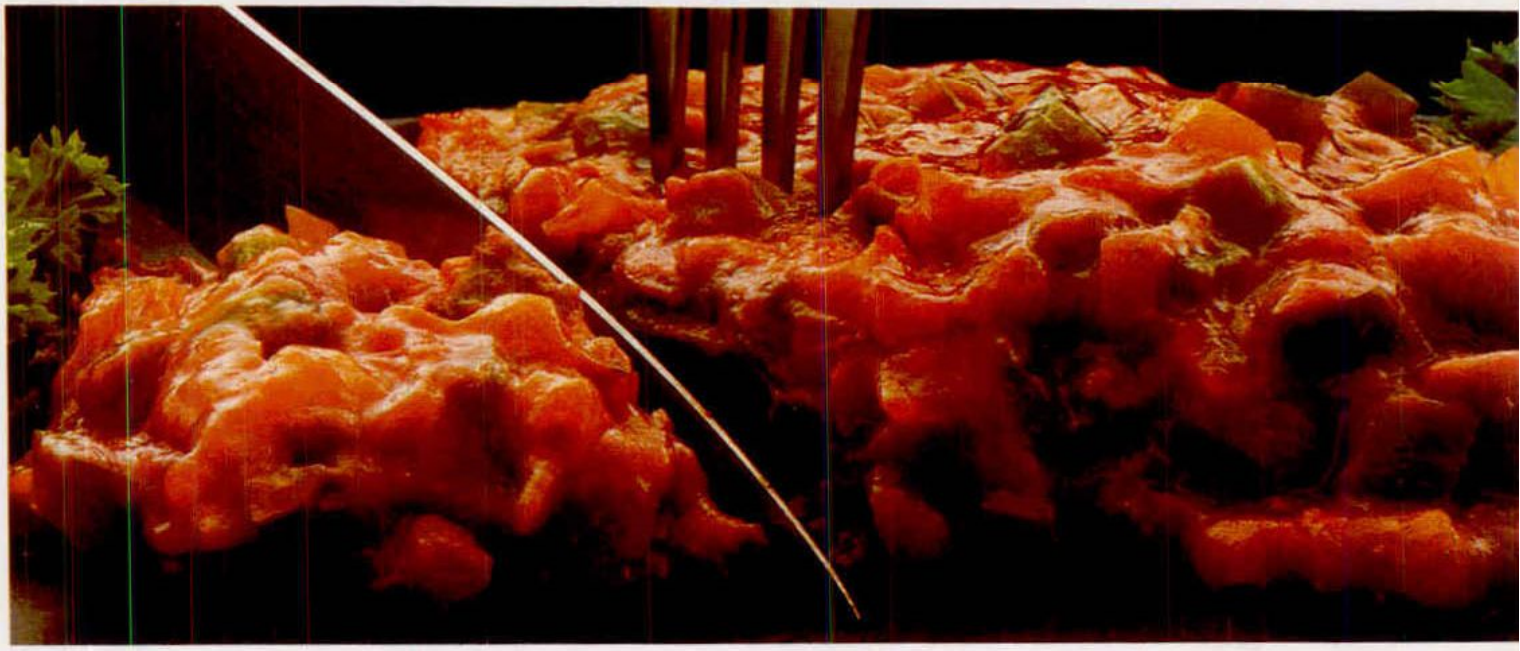
Standing time: 3 mins

1 small onion, chopped
1 small green pepper, chopped
4 quick-frying steaks (weighing 450-700g / 1-1½ lb)
30ml / 2 tbls plain flour
375g / 13oz can tomato sauce
1 beef stock cube, crumbled
5ml / 1tsp Worcestershire sauce

SERVES 4

1 Sprinkle onion and green pepper into a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in baking dish. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes or until tender.
2 Toss steaks in flour until completely coated and lay over the onion and pepper, making sure that the steaks do not overlap.
3 Combine tomato sauce, stock cube and Worcestershire sauce in a jug. Mix thoroughly, then pour evenly over steaks, completely coating with sauce.
4 Cover with greaseproof paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and cook for about 10-12 minutes, or until meat is cooked to your liking, turning and rearranging halfway through. Leave to stand for 3 minutes before serving.

Swiss steaks



Steak medley

12 mins

Standing time: none

4 quick-frying steaks (weighing 450-700g / 1-1½lb)
1 onion, cut into 8 wedges
1 courgette, cut into thin slices
30ml / 2tbls white wine
2.5ml / ½tsp dried dill
1 tomato, cut into wedges
salt and pepper

SERVES 4

1 Place the steaks on a roasting rack. Microwave at 100% (High) for 6-8 minutes, or until the meat is no longer pink. Rearrange after half the cooking time. Set aside.
2 In a medium mixing bowl, combine the onion, courgette, wine and dill. Cover with cling film and microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes, or until the onion is translucent and the courgette tender, stirring 2 or 3 times during cooking. Add tomato.
3 Place mixture on steaks and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, or until steaks are heated through. Season to taste.

Piquant steaks

17 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

4 quick-frying steaks (weighing 450-700g / 1-1½lb
1 × 40g / 1½oz pkt brown onion soup
225g / 8oz pkt frozen Brussels sprouts

SERVES 4

1 Coat the steaks with soup mix. Place in 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in dish, leaving centre clear. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.
2 Arrange the Brussels sprouts in the centre of the dish and cover the sprouts only with cling film. Cover the whole dish with greaseproof paper.
3 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 8 minutes. Turn and rearrange steaks once.
4 Microwave for 6-8 minutes, or until the meat is done to your liking and the vegetables are tender-crisp. Stand for 3 minutes.

Microtips

For softer vegetables, make a small hole in the packet of Brussels sprouts and microwave at 100% (High) for 1½ minutes before removing from the packet.

Batch soups

A batch of home made soups in the freezer will be invaluable for all kinds of occasions. With the help of your microwave you can serve hot soup with only a few minutes' notice.

Whether you prefer to cook soups by microwave or conventionally for batch-freezing, you will certainly find the microwave cooker invaluable when it comes to thawing and reheating them, quickly and efficiently.

Individual portions of soup are both easy and convenient to cope with — especially as you can freeze, thaw and reheat a portion in the same serving bowl, so saving time and washing up!

To thaw and reheat 4 portions of soup at the same time, follow the instructions given on page 201 and see the timings given in the chart on page 204.

Go lightly with salt and other seasonings, as flavours tend to intensify in the freezer (slight evaporation occurs over a long period of storage) so taste and adjust the seasoning after thawing if necessary. To save thawing time and freezer space, you may like to make a very concentrated soup (such as Watercress soup on page 204), diluting it with stock, milk or cream after thawing.

When preparing soups for the freezer, it is wise to leave out ingredients such as eggs or cream — unless the recipe states otherwise (ie Vichyssoise, see page 202). In some cases these ingredients are best added after thawing to prevent the soup from curdling and separating.

After cooking, cool the soup completely before packing for the freezer. You can speed this up considerably by standing the dish or bowl in a larger bowl of iced water. Use freezer bags for one-portion soups, and follow the step-by-step instructions given on page 201, then pack all 4 individual portions in one large bag for freezing.

When freezing large, family-sized quantities, support the freezer bag in a carton until the soup is frozen solid — then remove from carton — you'll find that neat packages stack more easily in your freezer. To thaw, remove the metal twist-tie and place the bag in a large bowl. Microwave at 50% (Medium) until the complete portion of soup comes free from the bag and turn the soup into the bowl. Cover with cling film and continue microwaving at 100% (High), breaking up with a fork from time to time. When the soup starts to bubble round the edges, stir it well to distribute the heat evenly and continue microwaving at 100% (High) until piping hot. Stir again on removal from the cooker before serving.

RAY DUNS

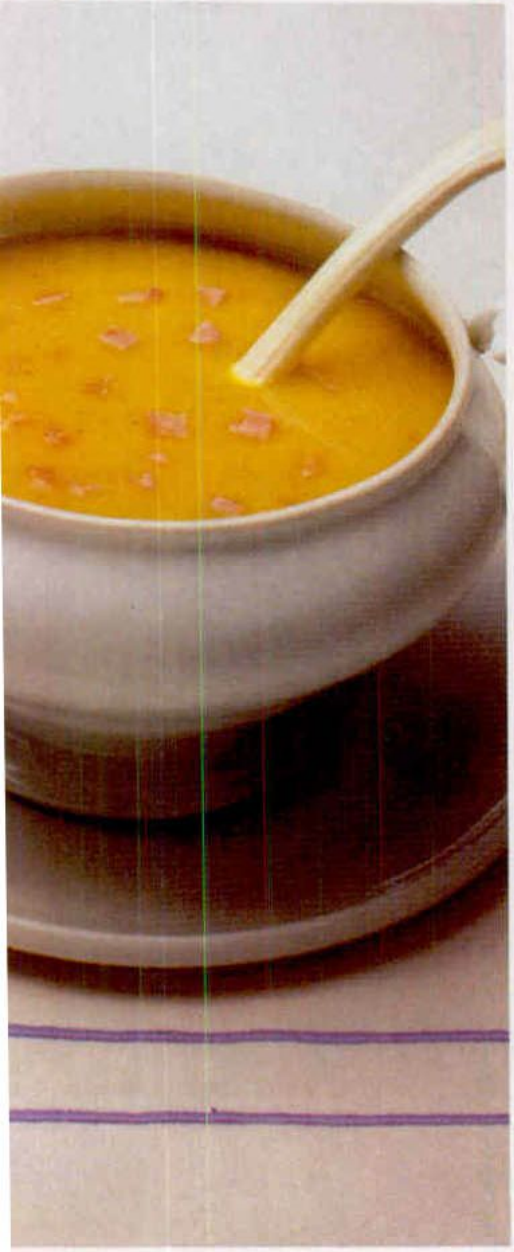
Lentil and Ham Soup

How to freeze one-portion soups

Place *a heavy-duty freezer bag in the serving bowl or mug, in which you will eventually serve the soup (make sure that it is both freezer-proof and microwave safe).*

Pour *in one quarter of the cold soup. Twist the neck of the bag and fasten with a twist-tie, leaving 1cm / ½in headspace to allow for expansion during freezing.*

Prepare *3 more bowls or mugs, as shown, and freeze until solid. Remove bags of frozen soup from bowls. Pack portions in one large bag. Label and freeze for up to 2 months.*



How to thaw one-portion soups

Remove *the metal twist-tie and put the bag of frozen soup in the serving bowl or mug. Microwave at 50% (Medium) until the portion of soup loosens from the bag.*

Turn *the loosened portion of soup into the serving bowl or mug and remove the bag. Cover the bowl or mug with a piece of cling film rolled back at one edge.*

Microwave *at 100% (High), for first heating time (see chart on page 204), breaking up with a fork.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for second heating time, stirring occasionally to distribute heat.*

Summer vegetable soup

37½ mins

Standing time: none

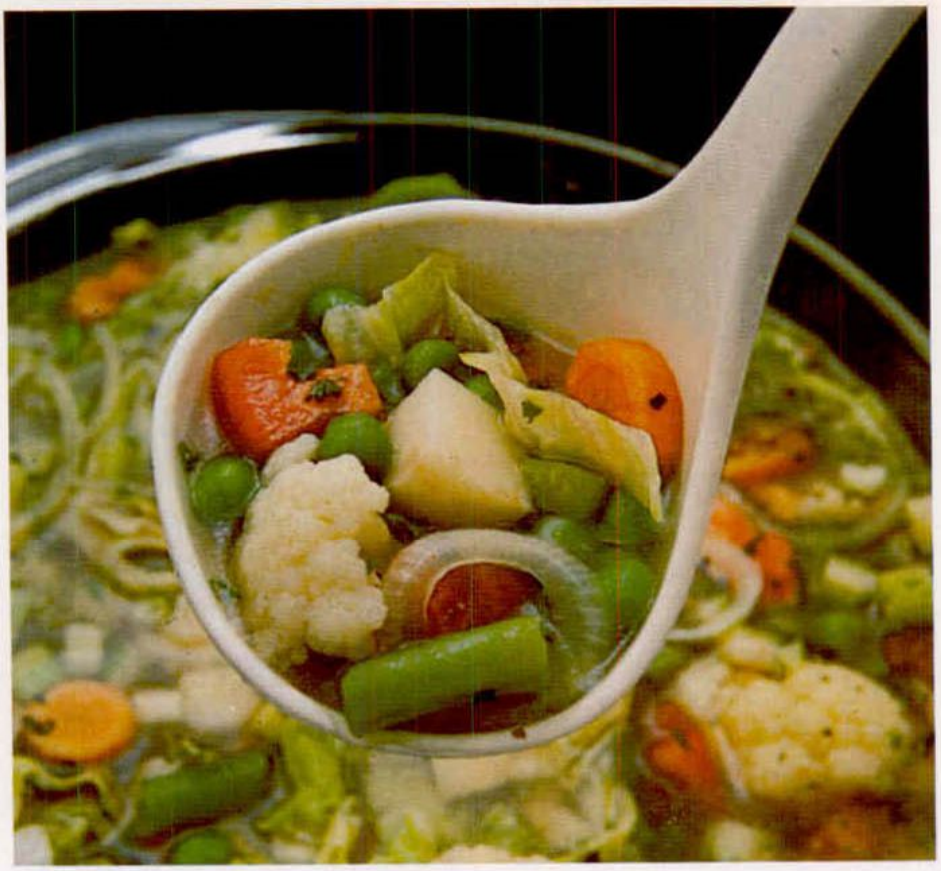
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
1 onion, thinly sliced
2 carrots, cut in 1cm / ½in slices
2 potatoes, cut in 1cm / ½ in dice
2 celery stalks, diced
2 × 425g / 14oz cans chicken broth, made up to 1.1L / 2pt with water
15ml / 1tbls fresh chopped parsley
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried basil
1.5ml / ¼tsp crushed dried rosemary
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
1 tomato, peeled and chopped
75g / 3oz frozen cut green beans
100g / 4oz frozen peas
100g / 4oz frozen cauliflower, cut into small florets

TO FINISH
4 lettuce leaves, coarsely-shredded

SERVES 4

1 Combine the butter and onion in a 2.8L / 5pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes or until the onion is softened.
2 Add the carrots, potatoes and celery. Re-cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, stirring once.
3 Add the broth, herbs and salt. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 23-25 minutes until the vegetables are almost tender, stirring once.
4 Stir in the chopped tomato, frozen beans, peas and cauliflower. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes, until the soup is thoroughly heated through and all the vegetables are tender and cooked through.
5 Cool the soup. Follow the step-by-step freezing instructions given on the page 201. Freeze for up to 2 months.

To serve hot: Follow the step-by-step thawing instructions on page 201, then see chart for thawing and reheating times.



Vichyssoise

20 mins

Standing time: none

4 potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
2 chicken stock cubes
125ml / 4fl oz hot water
50g / 2oz butter or margarine
300ml / ½pt single cream
2 leeks, trimmed and finely sliced
1 onion, finely chopped
575ml / 1pt milk
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
pepper to taste
snipped chives, to garnish

SERVES 4

1 Place the potatoes and crumbled stock cubes in a large bowl. Stir in the hot water; cover.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 12 minutes, or until tender, stirring twice.
3 Add half the butter and 150ml/ ¼pt cream to potatoes and keep on one side.
4 In a medium bowl, combine the leeks, onion and remaining butter; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes, or until tender, stirring twice.
5 In a blender or food processor, purée the potato mixture with the onion and leeks, remaining cream, milk and salt and pepper until smooth.
6 Cool the soup. Follow the step-by-step freezing instructions given on page 201. Freeze for up to 2 months.

To serve hot: Follow the step-by-step thawing instructions given on page 201, then see chart for thawing and reheating times. Garnish with fresh snipped chives, if liked.

To serve cold: Follow the step-by-step thawing instructions given on page 201 to the end of step 2. Microwave at 70% (Medium-High) for 8 minutes, breaking apart 2 or 3 times with a fork, then at 30% (Low) for 5-10 minutes. (Some icy pieces will remain.) Leave to stand for 5-10 minutes to complete thawing. Thin the consistency of Vichyssoise with a little extra chilled cream or milk if liked. Garnish with fresh snipped chives and serve chilled.

Lentil and ham soup

16 mins

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz split red lentils
1 large onion, chopped
2 carrots, chopped
2 celery stalks, chopped
850ml / 1½pt boiling water
1-1½ chicken stock cubes (or use ham stock cubes)
15ml / ¼tsp dried mixed herbs
salt and pepper

TO FINISH
100g / 4oz cooked ham, diced

SERVES 4

1 Combine the lentils, onion, carrots, celery, water, crumbled stock cubes and herbs in a large bowl. Cover with cling film.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes, until water boils, stirring twice.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 8-9 minutes or until lentils are tender, stirring twice.
4 In a blender or food processor, purée the mixture until smooth. Season to taste.
5 Cool the soup. Follow the step-by-step freezing instructions given on page 201. Freeze for up to 2 months.

To serve hot: Follow the step-by-step thawing instructions given on page 201, then see chart for thawing and reheating times.

Cook's notes

Garnishes for soups
Add any of the following to portions of soups just before serving: a sprinkling of fresh chopped herbs (ie basil, parsley, chives, marjoram); cooked crumbled bacon; thin slices of lemon or lime; thin slices of button mushroom or unpeeled cucumber; one or two small celery leaves; dainty fennel fronds; small sprigs of watercress or freshly-picked mint; a spoonful of single, double or soured cream swirled through with a spoon.

Tomato vegetable soup

30 mins

Standing time: none

6 tomatoes, peeled and chopped
850ml / 1½pt water
300g / 11oz can condensed tomato soup
2 chicken stock cubes
15ml / 1tbls sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried basil
1.5ml / ¼tsp pepper
225g / 8oz broccoli
225g / 8oz cauliflower, cut into 2.5cm / 1in pieces
1 onion, cut into 1cm / ½in wedges
50g / 2oz cooked rice

SERVES 4

1 In a 2.8L / 5pt casserole, combine the tomatoes, water, tomato soup, stock cubes, sugar, basil and pepper; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 10 minutes, stirring 2 or 3 times.
2 Cut broccoli into small florets. Remove and discard lower stalks. Cut upper stalks into thin slices. Add the broccoli, cauliflower and onion, stir and cover.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 20 minutes or until the vegetables are tender, stirring twice. Stir in the rice.
4 Cool the soup. Follow the step-by-step freezing instructions given on page 204 for thawing and re-months.

To serve hot: Follow the step-by-step thawing instructions given on page 201, then see chart on page 204 for thawing and reheating.

Microtips

To peel tomatoes, place 1.1L / 2pt boiling water in a casserole or bowl. Pierce the tomato skins before placing in boiling water. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30 seconds, or until the skins begin to loosen. Plunge the tomatoes into a bowl of cold water and remove the skins.

Watercress soup

14 mins

Standing time: none

2 bunches watercress, stalks trimmed
1 large onion, finely chopped
40g / 1½oz butter or margarine
175g / 6oz potato, chopped
1 chicken stock cube
575ml / 1pt hot water
salt and pepper

TO FINISH
150ml / ¼pt single cream
200ml / 7fl oz milk

TO GARNISH
swirls of single cream

SERVES 4

1 Place the watercress, onion and butter in a large bowl. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes, stirring once.
2 Add the potato, stock cube and water. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 10-12 minutes, stirring twice.
3 In a blender or food processor, purée the mixture until smooth.
4 Cool the soup. Follow step-by-step freezing instructions given on page 201. Freeze up to 2 months.

To serve hot: Follow the step-by-step thawing instructions given on page 201, then see chart for thawing and reheating times.

To serve cold: Follow the instructions given for Vichyssoise (to serve cold) on page 202. Do not thin the consistency of soup. Garnish with swirls of cream.

Thawing and reheating times for one-portion and four-portion soups

SOUP	THAWING TIMES AT 50% (MEDIUM)	HEATING TIMES AT 100% (HIGH)	OTHER INSTRUCTIONS
Tomato vegetable			
One-portion	50 seconds to loosen	1 minute	break up with a fork.
		2-3 minutes	covered and stirring once.
Four-portions	1 minute to loosen	2-3 minutes	break up with a fork.
		18 minutes	covered and stirring several times.
Vichyssoise			
One-portion	40 seconds to loosen	30 seconds	break up with a fork.
		2-2½ minutes	covered and stirring once.
Four-portions	50-60 seconds to loosen	2 minutes	break up with a fork.
		12-13 minutes	covered and stirring twice.
Watercress			
One-portion	40 seconds to loosen	30 seconds	break up with a fork. Add 75ml / 3fl oz mixed milk and cream to soup.
		3-3½ minutes	covered and stirring once.
Four-portions	50-60 seconds to loosen	2 minutes	break up with a fork. Mix milk and cream together and add 75ml / 3fl oz to each portion; stir well.
		10 minutes	covered and stirring twice.
Summer vegetable			
One-portion	50 seconds to loosen	1 minute	break up with a fork. Stir in 1 shredded lettuce leaf.
		3-4 minutes	covered and stirring once.
Four-portions	1 minute to loosen	2-3 minutes	break up with a fork.
		10 minutes	Stir in 4 shredded lettuce leaves.
		8 minutes	covered and stirring twice.
Lentil and ham			
One-portion	40 seconds to loosen	30 seconds	break up with a fork. Stir in 25g / 1oz chopped ham.
		3-3½ minutes	covered and stirring once.
Four portions	50-60 seconds to loosen	2 minutes	break up with a fork. Stir in ham.
		10 minutes	covered and stirring twice.

Microwaving mushrooms

Mushrooms make an excellent snack or starter, and perk up any sauce for a delicious main course. Just try some of these speedy recipes in the microwave and see how good they taste.

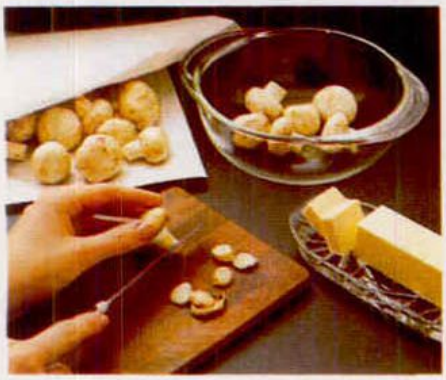
Mushrooms are available all year round with the peak season occurring during the winter months. Cultivated mushrooms are harvested young at the button or cap stage, where they are just beginning to open. Mature mushrooms are flat.

Size, therefore, helps determine use not quality. Serve the button mushrooms whole, and flat or large cap mushrooms chopped or for stuffing with any one of the fillings suggested here.

When cooked, mushrooms give off a good deal of liquid. Use this to enhance the flavour of gravies, sauces or soup.

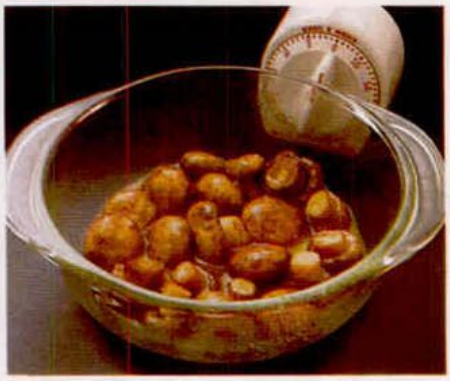
Stuffed mushrooms: four centre ones clockwise *Spinach Mushrooms, Cheesy Walnut Mushrooms, Cheesy Ham Mushrooms, Salami-cheese Mushrooms*

How to prepare and microwave whole mushrooms



Wash *225g / 8oz mushrooms gently in cool water, or wipe with a damp cloth; do not soak or peel. Pat dry. Cut a thin slice off the stem. Place in a 850ml / 1½pt casserole with 25g / 1oz butter.*

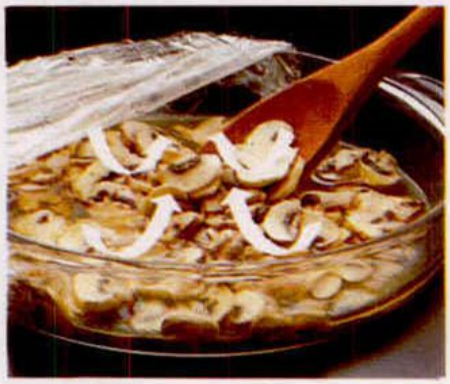
Do not *salt, but sprinkle with lemon juice and cover. Microwave at 100% (High), stirring when the butter is almost melted, then every 1½ minutes to rearrange.*



Continue *microwaving until the mushrooms have darkened slightly in colour. Mushrooms of uniform size microwave most evenly. See the chart below for cooking and standing times.*

How to microwave sliced mushrooms

Cut *225g / 8oz mushrooms in 3mm / ⅛in slices. Microwaving time is directly related to the thickness of the slices; try to slice mushrooms to a uniform thickness. Place in a 20cm / 8in round dish with 25g / 1oz butter or margarine. Do not salt; cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.*



Microwave *at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, stirring after half the cooking time. This serves 2 as a vegetable, or 4 as a meat garnish.*

Microwave times for mushrooms

TYPE	AMOUNT	MICROWAVE TIME AT 100% HIGH	PROCEDURE
Whole	225g / 8oz	3-4 minutes	Follow the step-by-step instructions. Leave to stand for 1-2 minutes.
	450g / 1lb	4-5 minutes	Follow the step-by-step instructions. Dot with 40g / 1½oz butter. Leave to stand for 1-2 minutes.
Slices 3mm / ⅛ in	225g / 8oz	3-4 minutes	Follow the step-by-step instructions. Dot with 25g / 1oz butter. Cover with cling film. Stir once. Leave to stand for 1-2 minutes.

Storing mushrooms

Remove *tightly sealed cling film from the top of the box or tray if bought in a container, and re-cover loosely with absorbent paper. Do not wash mushrooms until ready to use. Store in the refrigerator for up to 2-3 days.*

Cheesy mushrooms

4½ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

8 whole fresh mushrooms, 6.5-7.5cm / 2½-3in diameter
1 onion, finely chopped
25g / 1oz butter, margarine or garlic butter, (see page 209)
15ml / 1tbls sherry
salt and pepper
100g / 4oz Huntsman or Cheddar cheese, cut into 8 pieces
shredded lettuce and tomato slices to garnish

SERVES 4

1 Wipe the mushrooms to clean; remove the stems and chop finely. Arrange the caps in a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in baking dish, stem side up. Set aside.
2 In a 850m / 1½pt casserole, combine the chopped onion, butter and sherry. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes, or until tender, stirring once. Season to taste. Mound equal quantities of the sherry mix in the mushroom caps. Place 1 piece of cheese on top of each stuffed mushroom.
3 Reduce power to 50% (Medium) for 3-4 minutes, or until the cheese melts, rotating the dish and rearranging the mushrooms once. Serve on shredded lettuce and garnish with tomato slices. Let stand 5 minutes.

Below *Cheesy Mushrooms*

Mushroom sauce

14 mins

Standing time: none

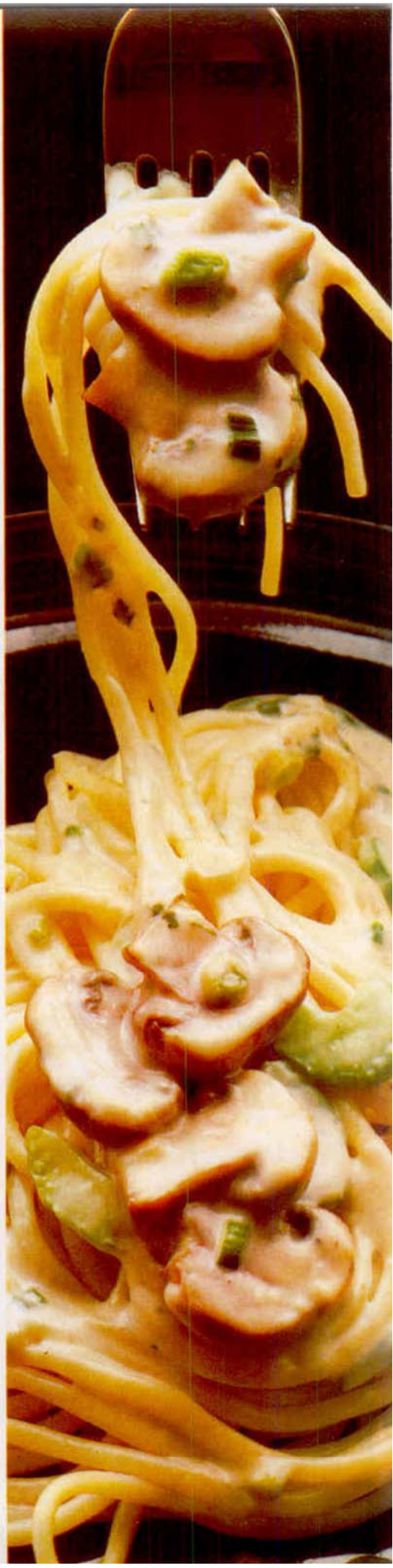
450g / 1lb fresh mushrooms, sliced 6mm / ¼in thick
1 celery stalk, thinly sliced
4 spring onions, chopped
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
30ml / 2 tbls plain flour
5ml / 1tsp dried chervil
large pinch of garlic powder
pinch of cayenne pepper (optional)
1 bay leaf
salt and pepper
½ chicken stock cube, crumbled
15ml / 1tbls sherry
150ml / 5fl oz whipping cream
150ml / 5fl oz milk

SERVES 4

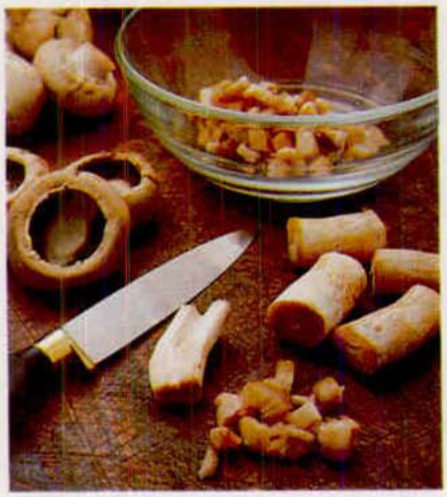
1 In a 2.3L / 4pt casserole, combine the vegetables and butter or margarine; cover.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 5-7 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender, stirring once.
3 Mix in the flour, seasonings, stock cube and sherry. Blend in the cream and milk.
4 Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 9-10 minutes, or until the sauce is thickened and bubbling, stirring several times during the cooking time.
5 Serve hot over conventionally cooked spaghetti.

Right *Mushroom Sauce*

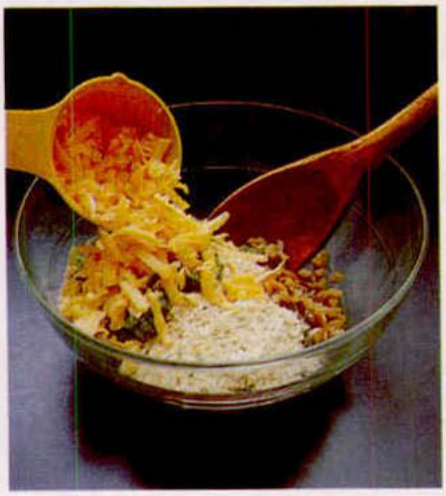
PAUL WEBSTER



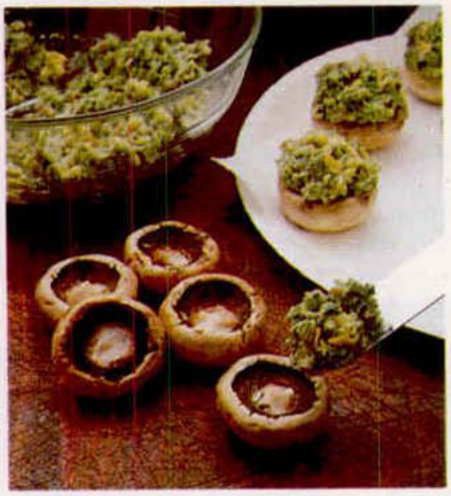
How to microwave Stuffed mushrooms



Wash *225g / 8oz flat or large cap mushrooms. Remove and chop the stems, place in a small bowl, with the onion or butter if included. Cover.*



Microwave *at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Mound the stuffing mixture into the mushroom caps.*



Arrange *the caps on a plate lined with absorbent paper, placing the larger caps to the outside. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3½ minutes.*

Spinach mushrooms

3½ mins

Standing time: none

4-6 mushrooms
75g / 3oz frozen chopped spinach
45ml / 3tbls Cheddar cheese, grated
15ml / 1 tbls breadcrumbs
1.5ml / ¼tsp thyme
pimiento, to garnish

SERVES 3-4

1 Place the frozen spinach in a small bowl and thaw at 50% (Medium) for 2-3 minutes. Mix in the other ingredients; mound in the caps and microwave as directed in step 3 above. Garnish with strips of 'pimiento'.

Salami-cheese mushrooms

3¾ mins

Standing time: none

With this recipe and the Cheesy Ham Mushrooms, preheat the caps to prevent the fillings softening.

4-6 mushrooms, stems chopped
½ small onion, finely chopped
50g / 2oz smoky cheese spread
15ml / 1tbls breadcrumbs
3 slices salami, finely chopped
salt and pepper
spring onion slices, to garnish

SERVES 3-4

1 Place the mushroom stems and onion in a bowl; cover and microwave as directed in step 2 above. Add the remaining ingredients and stir well to combine.
2 Preheat the mushroom caps at 100% (High) for 2 minutes.
3 Fill the caps with the cheesy stuffing and arrange on a plate lined with absorbent paper. Microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds. Garnish with spring onion.

Cheesy ham mushrooms

4¼ mins

Standing time: none

4-6 mushrooms, stems chopped
75g / 3oz cream cheese
50g / 2oz ham, finely chopped
30ml / 2tbls almonds, chopped
salt and pepper

SERVES 4

1 Microwave the mushroom stems as directed in steps 1 and 2 above.
2 Microwave the cream cheese at 100% (High) for 15 seconds to soften. Add the remaining ingredients, stirring well to combine.
3 Pre-heat the mushroom caps at 100% (High) for 2 minutes.
4 Fill the caps with the cheesy stuffing and arrange on a plate lined with absorbent paper. Microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds, or until thoroughly heated through. Garnish with 'diamonds' of ham.

Cheesy walnut mushrooms

3½ mins

Standing time: none

4-6 mushrooms, stems chopped
75g / 3oz Danish Blue cheese, crumbled
50g / 2oz chopped walnuts
15ml / 1tbls breadcrumbs
salt and pepper
tomato slices, to garnish

SERVES 4

1 Microwave the stems as directed in steps 1 and 2 above. Stir in the cheese, add the walnuts and breadcrumbs. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
2 Stuff the mushrooms with the filling and microwave as directed in steps 3 and 4 above, until heated, rotating once or twice. Garnish with the pieces of tomato.

French-style mushrooms

3½ mins

Standing time: none

4-6 mushrooms, caps reserved, stems chopped
1 small onion, finely chopped
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
15ml / 1tbls chopped parsley
60ml / 4tbls breadcrumbs
salt and pepper
2.5ml / ½tsp garlic salt

SERVES 3-4

1 Place the mushroom stems and onion in a bowl, cover and microwave as directed in step 2, left. Add the remaining ingredients, then stuff and microwave the mushrooms as directed in the steps.

Mushrooms in garlic butter

6 mins

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz butter
2 garlic cloves, crushed
350g / 12oz mushrooms, sliced
salt and pepper

SERVES 4

1 Place the butter and garlic in a covered casserole. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2½-3 minutes, or until the butter melts and garlic browns. Stir once.
2 Add the mushrooms, salt and pepper; stir to coat. Cover the dish with cling film. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3½-4½ minutes, stirring after half the cooking time. Serve with steaks or hamburgers, or as a starter.

Mushrooms à la grecque

5 mins

Standing time: none

This is a traditional starter, which improves with time. It can be kept in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

350g / 12oz mushrooms, sliced
1 onion, thinly sliced
1 green pepper, cut into strips
1 garlic clove, crushed
125ml / 4fl oz white wine vinegar
125ml / 4fl oz olive oil
12 stuffed green olives, sliced
10ml / 2tsp chopped parsley
salt and pepper
large pinch of thyme

SERVES 6

1 Combine all the ingredients in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5-6 minutes, or until the vegetables are just tender, stirring once. Cool.
2 Refrigerate for 6-8 hours to allow the flavours to blend. Serve with French bread.

Mushrooms in sherry

5 mins

Standing time: none

5 spring onions, chopped
65ml / 2½fl oz sherry
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
large pinch of pepper
450g / 1lb mushrooms, cleaned and halved
25g / 1oz butter or margarine (optional)

SERVES 4-6

1 In a 1.7L / 3pt casserole, combine the chopped onion, sherry, salt and pepper. Add the mushroom halves and stir to coat well in the sherry mixture.
2 Dot with butter or margarine, if using, and cover with greaseproof paper to prevent spattering and retain moisture in the casserole. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5-6 minutes, stirring after half the cooking time.
3 Serve as a sauce on steaks or hamburgers.

Mushrooms à la Grecque

PAUL WEBSTER

STAR RECIPE

Celebration cheesecake

Cheesecakes are always firm favourites. The main recipe is quick and simple enough to make any time; add a topping and turn it into an ideal finale to any dinner party.

If you are a cheesecake fan, you'll find the microwave the quickest and most failsafe way to cook them. Like a delicate egg custard, the creamy filling needs gentle cooking so as not to dry the edges — and the microwave is ideal for this.

The basic cheesecake recipe can be served plain; for special occasions add one of the toppings or decorate with grated chocolate.

For a different-flavoured filling, substitute orange juice and add the grated zest of half an orange.

Cheesecake topped with kiwi fruit, orange and cream

IPC MAGAZINES

Basic cheesecake

12 mins

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz butter or margarine
100g / 4oz digestive biscuits, crushed
pinch of ground cinnamon

FILLING
450g / 1lb cream cheese
100g / 4oz caster sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
100ml / 3½fl oz milk
30ml / 2tbls lemon juice
3 large eggs

SERVES 8-10

Cheesecake toppings

VARIATIONS

Soured cream topping: Cool the cheesecake for 20-30 minutes. Mix 150ml / ¼pt soured cream with 30ml / 2tbls caster sugar and spread evenly over the top of the cheesecake. Chill before serving.

Fresh fruit topping: Chill the cheesecake then use 225g / 8oz prepared fruit, tossed in lemon juice. Dust top with caster sugar.

Cherry topping: After cooling but before chilling, spread a 390g / 13½oz can of cherry pie filling over the top of the cheesecake.

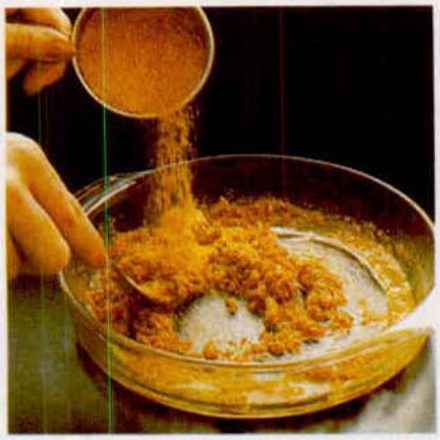
Glacé topping: Mix 45ml / 3tbls jam such as raspberry, apricot or strawberry with enough lemon juice to give a coating consistency. Pour this over the cheesecake.

Chocolate cream: Melt 75g / 3oz plain chocolate by microwaving at 50% (Medium) for 2½ minutes until soft. Allow to cool, then stir in 150ml / ¼pt soured cream. Do not mix thoroughly, but swirl over the top, then chill before serving.

Fruit and nut: Melt 75g / 3oz chocolate as above, then stir in 50g / 2oz each of chopped dried fruit and chopped toasted almonds. Add 30-45ml / 2-3tbls orange liqueur, spread over the cheesecake and chill.

Kiwi fruit and orange: Pipe 150ml / ¼pt whipped cream in rosettes. Intersperse with slices of peeled kiwi fruit and orange slices.

How to microwave a cheesecake



Microwave *the butter, covered, in a 23cm / 9in dish at 100% (High), for 45-60 seconds (see cook's note). Mix in the crumbs and cinnamon.*

Press *the crumb mixture firmly into the base of the dish. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1½ minutes, or until hot. Turn after 1 minute.*

Microwave *the cream cheese in a large bowl at 50% (Medium) for 1 minute. Stir in sugar, salt and milk. Whisk in lemon juice and eggs.*

Microwave *filling at 100% (High) for 4 minutes, stirring once, or until the mixture is like custard. Spread the filling in the crumb case.*

Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 5-10 minutes until almost set in centre. Do not boil. Turn every 2 minutes. Cool, then refrigerate for 8 hours.

Cook's notes

If you want to turn out the cheesecake, the 23cm / 9in dish must be lined. Melt the butter in a separate bowl. To line the dish, cut two 15 × 30cm / 6 × 12in strips of greaseproof paper, folded in half lengthways. Lay the strips in a cross in the base of the dish with the ends overlapping the edges of the dish. Grease and base line dish with a double layer of greaseproof paper.

After chilling, loosen edges with a knife. Using the greaseproof strips, carefully lift the cheesecake out. Remove the greaseproof strips and slide the cheesecake onto a plate.

Spanish dinner

Surprise and impress your friends with this delicious Spanish dinner. Exotic and 'different,' the meal takes very little time to prepare with the help of your microwave.

Once you have mastered the basic techniques of cooking with your microwave, you will be delighted to find how easy it is to produce a meal which is deliciously different. Dishes from other countries, such as this dinner with its decidedly Spanish flavour are easily adapted for microwave cooking. Much of the preparation can be done well in advance; indeed, if you decide to serve iced Gazpacho as a first course, it is a positive advantage to make it the day before so that it becomes really cold. This is one of the most famous of all Spanish recipes and is always popular. Serve the soup with a variety of garnishes; such as the diced vegetables and croûtons used here, or add chopped hard-boiled egg, spring onions or sweetcorn kernels.

Alternatively, begin with individual Mediterranean salads for a crunchy and exotic starter.

Serve the chicken with colourful saffron rice and braised peppers — for a more substantial meal, you could even start with the soup and serve the salads as an accompaniment to the chicken!

Oranges poached in red wine and spiced with cinnamon make a tasty and refreshing finish to the dinner. Prepare them early in the day, following our simple step-by-step instructions. If you use Spanish wine to make the syrup, you will be adding a truly authentic touch, but any full-bodied red wine will do.

PAUL WEBSTER

Countdown

The day before
Prepare and chill the Gazpacho. Prepare the vegetables for the garnish and refrigerate separately in plastic bags.

Early on the day
Prepare and microwave the Poached Oranges. Refrigerate.

Cut the peppers into strips. Slice and separate the onion rings. Refrigerate.

About 45 minutes before the meal
Arrange the Mediterranean Salads on individual plates.

Microwave the Saffron Rice, cover and leave to stand.

Microwave and drain the bacon for the Spanish Chicken. Prepare and microwave the sauce. Arrange the chicken in a dish. Pour over the sauce and microwave.

While the chicken is cooking, assemble the peppers and onions.

Just before the first course
Cover the chicken with foil and leave to stand. Microwave the Braised Peppers while eating the first course.

Between the first two courses
Reheat the Spanish Chicken at 100% (High) for 2-5 minutes.

MENU

Gazpacho
Classic Spanish iced soup

or Mediterranean salads
With asparagus and anchovies

Spanish chicken
Garnished with bacon and olives

Saffron rice
Attractively-coloured yellow rice

Braised peppers
With sliced onion rings

Poached oranges
Spiced with wine and cinnamon

Mediterranean salad

12-16 Iceberg or Webb's lettuce leaves
18-24 cooked or canned asparagus spears
18-24 canned anchovy fillets
100g / 4oz grated Parmesan cheese
8 black olives, stoned and sliced
4 tomatoes, cut into wedges

DRESSING
90ml / 6tbls olive oil
45ml / 3tbls red wine vinegar
salt and pepper
1.5ml / ¼tsp paprika

SERVES 6-8

1 On each serving plate, arrange lettuce leaves, 3 asparagus spears and 3 anchovy fillets.
2 Sprinkle over the Parmesan cheese and garnish with the sliced olives and tomato wedges.
3 Combine all the ingredients for the dressing in a screw-topped jar and shake vigorously until well blended then serve separately.

Gazpacho

5 mins

Standing time: none

6 tomatoes, peeled, halved and seeded
4 spring onions, chopped
275ml / ½pt hot water
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 small red pepper, chopped
1 cucumber, chopped
juice of ½-1 lemon
30ml / 2tbls olive oil
575ml / 1pt tomato juice
salt and pepper

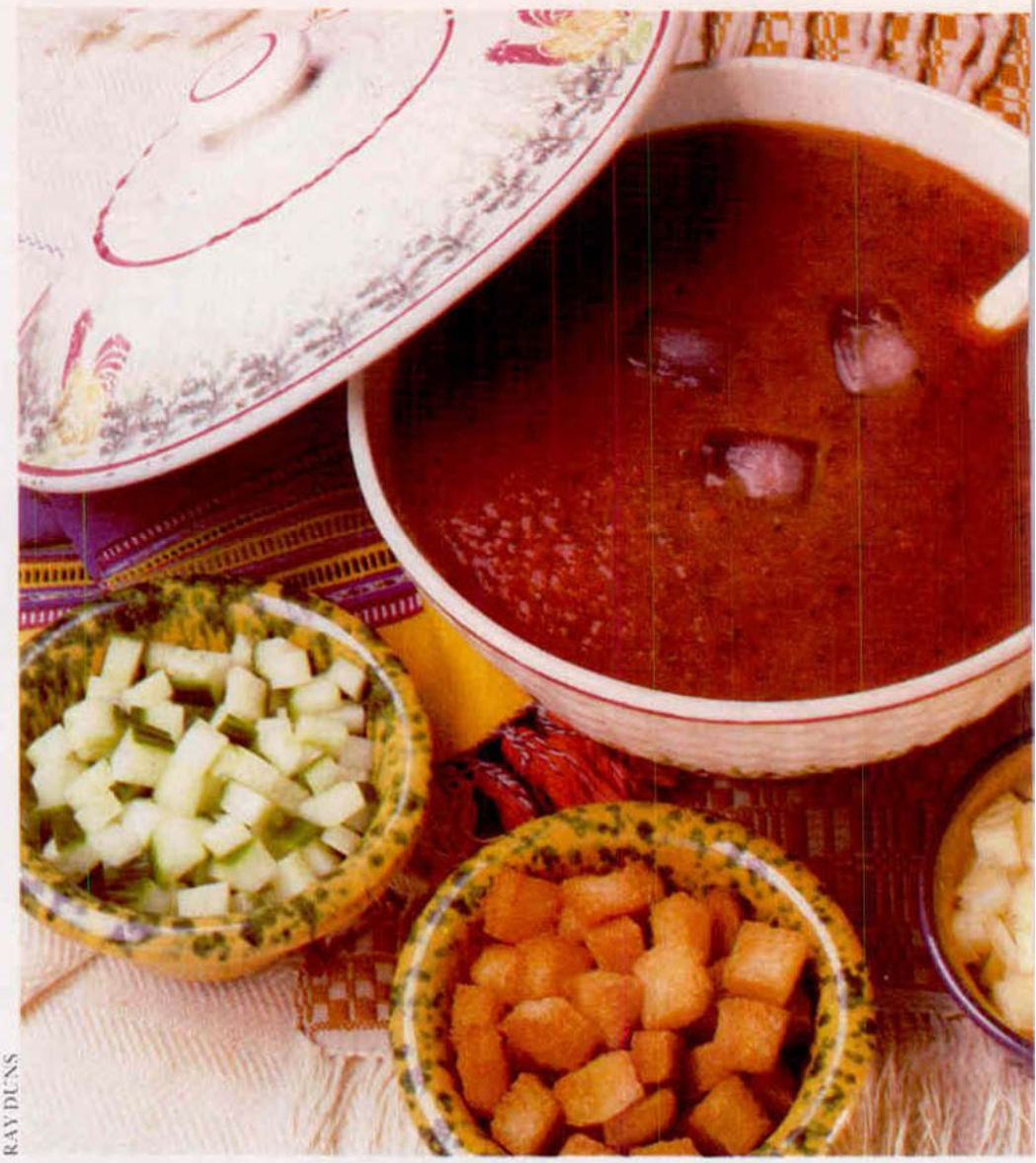
GARNISH
1 green or red pepper, finely diced
1 large onion, finely chopped
½ cucumber, diced
croûtons

SERVES 6-8

1 Combine the tomatoes, spring onions and water in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5-7 minutes, until the tomatoes are soft and pulpy.
2 Pour the cooked tomatoes, onions and liquid into a blender or food processor; add the crushed garlic and the chopped red pepper and cucumber and process until smooth.
3 Stir in lemon juice to taste, then the olive oil, tomato juice, salt and pepper. Mix well then add a little more lemon juice if necessary.
4 Chill well and serve the garnishes separately.

Microtips

Microwave the lemon at 100% (High) for 30 seconds before squeezing; this will greatly increase the amount of juice you can extract from it. Use your microwave to peel the tomatoes; bring the hot water to the boil in a casserole or bowl in the microwave. Add the tomatoes and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds. The skins will then slip off easily. You can use the same water to make the Gazpacho.



RAY DUNS

Gazpacho

Spanish chicken

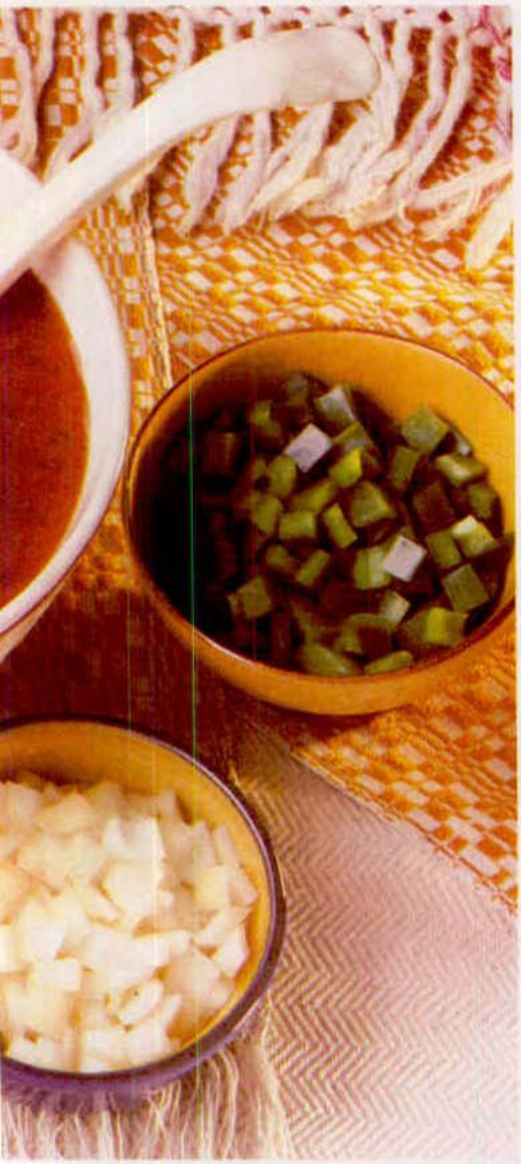
15½ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

150g / 5oz jar pimiento-stuffed olives, drained
225g / 8oz mushrooms, sliced
8 chicken breast fillets, skinned
2 bacon rashers, diced
15ml / 1tbls plain flour
30ml / 2 tbls tomato purée
200ml / 7fl oz red wine
salt and pepper

SERVES 6-8

1 In a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in baking dish, layer the olives, mushrooms and chicken breasts.
2 Place the bacon in a small bowl, cover with absorbent paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes, until crisp. Remove bacon with a slotted spoon and drain on absorbent paper. Blend the flour into the bacon dripping. Stir in the wine and purée, and season according to taste.
3 Microwave the sauce at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes or until thickened. Stir well, then mix in the bacon. Pour the sauce over the chicken and cover with grease-proof paper.
4 Microwave at 100% (High) for 13-15 minutes, or until the chicken is no longer pink in the middle, rearranging and turning the fillets once during cooking. Leave to stand, covered, for 5 minutes before serving with the saffron rice and peppers.



Braised peppers

10 mins

Standing time: none

2 large green peppers
2 large red peppers
2 large yellow peppers
1 onion, sliced into thin rings
1 garlic clove , crushed
5ml / 1tsp dried oregano
30ml / 2tbls olive oil
5ml / 1tsp vinegar
salt
chopped parsley to garnish

SERVES 6-8

1 Cut the peppers in half lengthways and remove the core and seeds. Rinse, then cut into 1cm / ½in strips.
2 Combine all the ingredients except the salt in a 2.8L / 5pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 10-12 minutes, or until the onion is soft and the peppers are tender but still crisp, stirring twice during cooking. Season to taste with salt before serving. Garnish with chopped parsley if wished.

VARIATION
For a simpler and less expensive dish, use all green peppers or a combination of green and one red for colour contrast.

Saffron rice

17 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

1 large garlic clove, crushed
15ml / 1tbls olive oil
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground saffron
750ml / 1¼pt hot water
300g / 11oz long-grain rice
salt
30ml / 2tbls finely chopped parsley

SERVES 6-8

1 In a 2.5L / 4½pt casserole, combine the garlic, olive oil and ground saffron. Stir well to blend, then microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 2 minutes.
2 Wash the rice under running cold water. Stir into the casserole with the 750ml / 1¼pt hot water. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.
3 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium). Microwave for 12 minutes, or until the rice is tender and all the liquid has been absorbed. Leave to stand, covered, for 5 minutes, then fluff with a fork, stir in the parsley and season to taste.

Spanish Chicken and Braised Peppers on Saffron Rice

PAUL WEBSTER

Poached oranges

2 mins

Standing time: none

7 large oranges
2.5ml / ½ tsp sugar
100ml / 3½fl oz Spanish red wine
2.5ml / ½tsp finely grated lemon zest
2.5ml / ½tsp ground cinnamon

SERVES 6-8

How to microwave Poached oranges

Slice *off the ends of the oranges. Using a sawing motion, peel in a spiral. Remove the membrane, leaving as much fruit as possible.*

Hold *the fruit over a bowl to catch the juice. Cut to the centre between the segments, separating from the membrane with a sharp knife.*

Place *the orange segments in a 1.1 / 2pt casserole. Combine the remaining ingredients. Pour over the orange segments; cover.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, or until heated, stirring once or twice during the cooking time. Cool, then chill before serving.*

Hot and cold drinks

Beverages for all occasions can be made quickly and easily in the microwave. Try Marshmallow hot chocolate, which children will adore, or a refreshing, chilled Spiced tea.

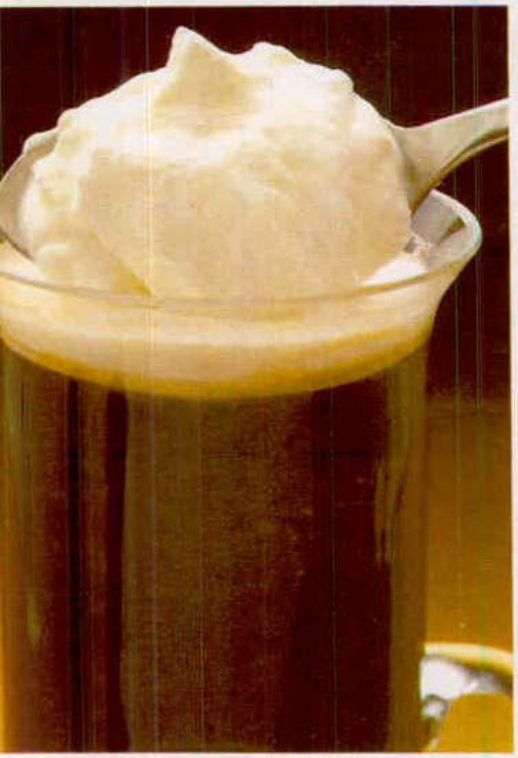
Making drinks in the microwave is easy enough for the children to tackle. You can make all types of beverages: from simple hot chocolate to sophisticated after-dinner drinks like Irish coffee.

It is quick and labour-saving to use your microwave for individual instant drinks, heating the liquids in the mugs or the paper or plastic cups in which you are going to serve them. For larger quantities a kettle will probably be more practical. Give all drinks a good stir before microwaving.

Watch through the cooker door when heating milk-based drinks, they will boil over just as easily in the microwave as on a conventional cooker. Open the cooker door to stop the microwave as soon as the milk begins to boil.

Left to right: *Café au lait, Marshmallow Hot Chocolate, Spiced Tea*

CHRIS KING



How to microwave liquids

Arrange *cups or mugs of liquid in a ring inside the microwave cooker, when heating more than two. Leave a space between the mugs and leave the centre empty.*

Boiling *time depends on the amount of water heated and how cold it is. In a microwave, it takes less than two minutes to boil a cup or mugful of water for a single serving.*

Irish coffee

1 min

Standing time: none

150ml /5fl oz hot, strong black coffee
5-10ml / 1-2 tsp light brown sugar
50ml / 2fl oz Irish whiskey
15ml / 1tbls thick cream, whipped

SERVES 1

1 Put the coffee in a heatproof, glass coffee mug and spoon in the sugar to taste. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes until hot.
2 Stir in the whiskey. Spoon the whipped cream carefully on top of the glass and serve.

Café au lait

5 mins

Standing time: none

450ml / 16fl oz milk
450ml / 16fl oz water
22.5ml / 1½tbls instant coffee
60ml / 4tbls whipped cream
freshly grated nutmeg

SERVES 4

1 Put the milk and water in a 1.1L / 2pt jug. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5-8 minutes, until hot but not boiling.
2 Stir in the coffee and pour into 4 cups or mugs. Top each one with a tablespoon of whipped cream and a sprinkling of nutmeg.

Spiced tea

6 mins

Standing time: 3-5 mins

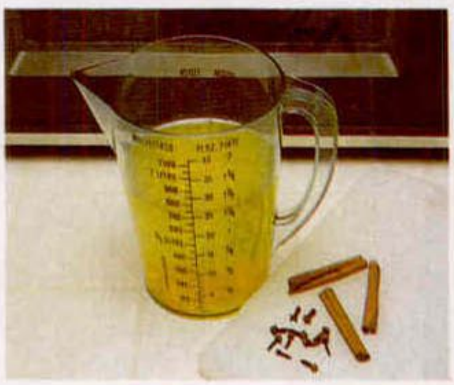
An unusual and refreshing drink which can be served hot in winter or chilled in summer.

850ml / 1½pt hot water
15ml / 1tbls grated orange zest
5ml / 1tsp grated lemon zest
6 cloves
1 cinnamon stick
3 tea bags
slices of orange or lemon, to serve

SERVES 4

1 Combine the hot water, grated orange and lemon zest, cloves and cinnamon stick in a 1.1L / 2pt jug.
2 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 6-10 minutes, or until boiling. Put the tea bags in a large teapot and pour in the liquid, leave to brew for 3-5 minutes then remove the tea bags. Serve either hot or chilled with a slice of orange or lemon.

How to microwave Spiced tea



Combine *the water, orange, lemon zest and spices. Microwave at 100% (High) until boiling.*

Pour *the liquid over the teabags and leave to brew for 3-5 minutes. Serve with a slice of orange or lemon.*

Spiced coffee

6 mins

Standing time: none

850ml / 1½pt hot water
1 cinnamon stick
5ml / 1tsp whole allspice
15ml / 1tbls sugar
freshly grated nutmeg
15ml / 1tbls instant coffee
lemon twists and cinnamon sticks, to serve

SERVES 4

1 Combine the water, cinnamon stick, allspice, sugar and nutmeg to taste in a 1.1L / 2pt bowl.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 6-8 minutes, or until the mixture comes to a full rolling boil.
3 Remove the bowl from microwave and strain the liquid over the instant coffee. Stir to dissolve. Serve with a lemon twist and cinnamon stick.

Marshmallow hot chocolate

1 min

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz dark chocolate, broken into pieces
575ml / 1pt milk
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground cinnamon
10ml / 2tsp sugar
4 marshmallows, halved

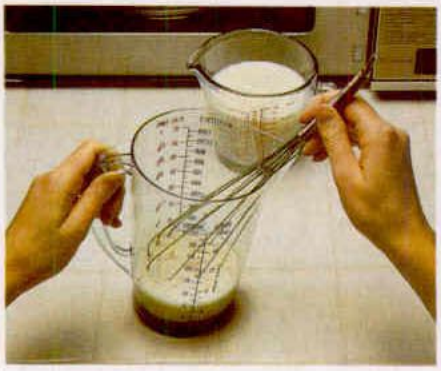
SERVES 2

1 Put the chocolate into a wide-necked jug and microwave on 50% (Medium) for 3½ minutes, until melted.
2 Gradually whisk in the milk, sugar and cinnamon and heat at 100% (High) for 4 minutes.
3 Pour the chocolate milk into 2 large mugs and float 4 marshmallow halves on each. Arrange the mugs in the microwave and heat on 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes until the marshmallows are puffed.

VARIATION

To make Hot mocha, omit the marshmallows and stir 1.5ml / ¼tsp instant coffee granules into each serving. Top with whipped cream.

How to microwave Marshmallow hot chocolate



Melt *the chocolate, then whisk in the milk, cinnamon and sugar. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes.*

Top *each mug with 4 marshmallow halves, arrange in microwave and heat until marshmallows are puffed.*

Ham, gammon and bacon

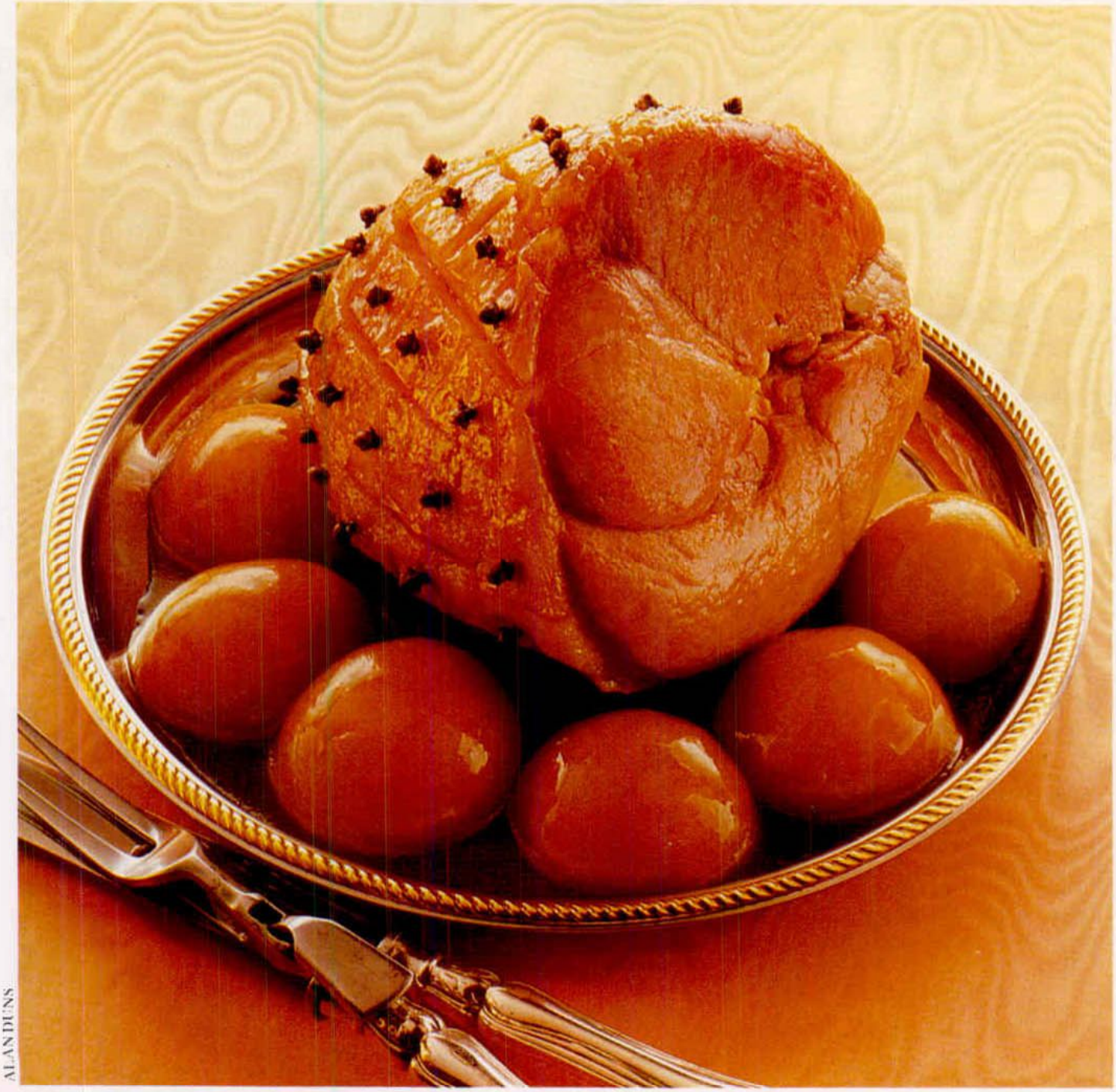
Precooked joints of ham or gammon or easy bacon chops are some of the tastiest convenience foods on the market. Just heat them through in your microwave and top with a glaze or sauce for versatile meals.

Conveniently-sized, vacuum-packed ham and gammon joints are now widely available from supermarket chilled cabinets. These should be marked either 'fully cooked' or 'cook before eating'. *Substitutes for Australian and New Zealand readers are given on page 224.

Joints can be heated through in the microwave to make a tasty mid-week meal for the family, or topped with an attractive glaze.

Also available are precooked bacon chops which can be heated through with a tasty sauce.

Studded Ham or Gammon



ALAN DUNS

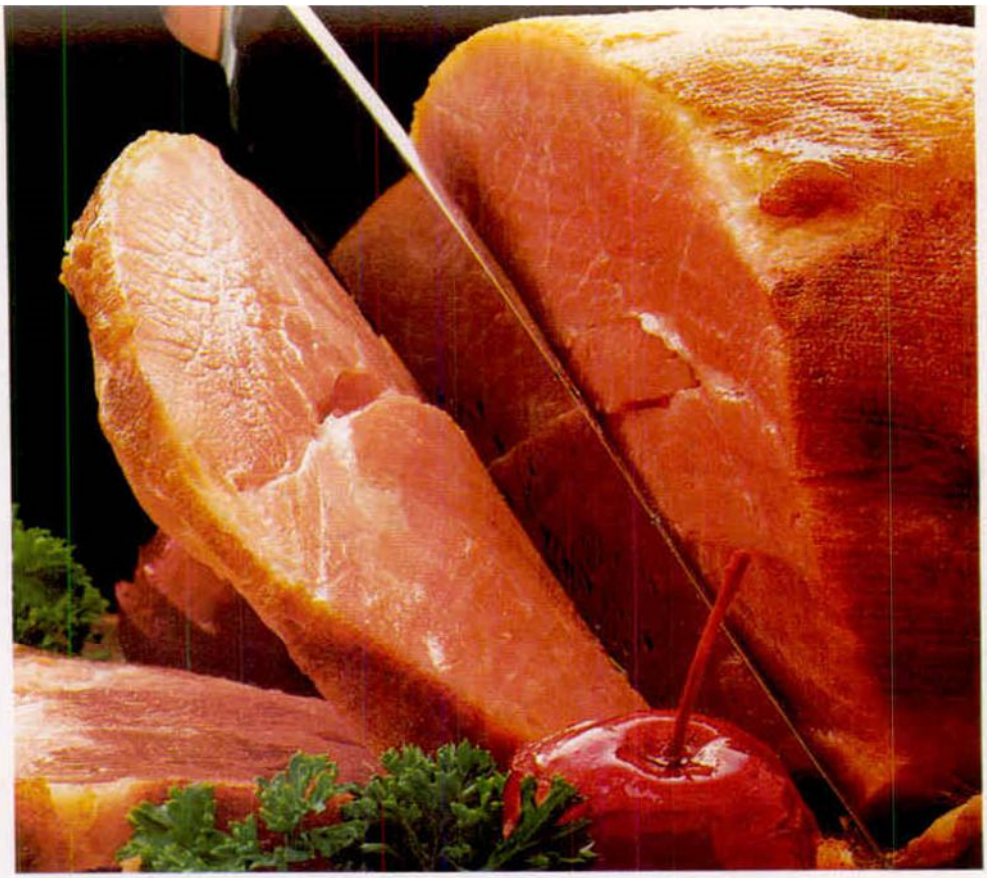
Heating cooked ham

Cooked ham joints need only to be microwaved to serving temperature (see chart), then they can be carved and served with a simple sauce for a family meal, or glazed for a dinner party dish.

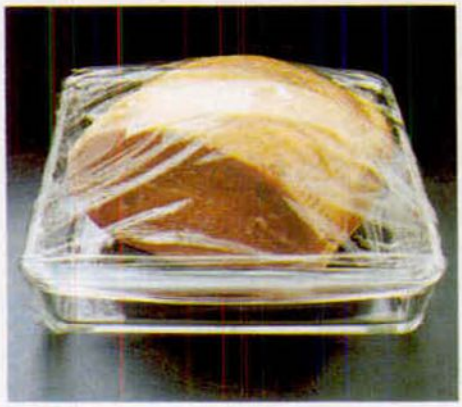
Joints weighing over 2.3kg / 5lb will dry out and overcook in the microwave, so slice first for quick and even heating.

Precooked ham
50% (Medium)
13-17 minutes per 450g / 1lb
54°C / 129°F internal temperature

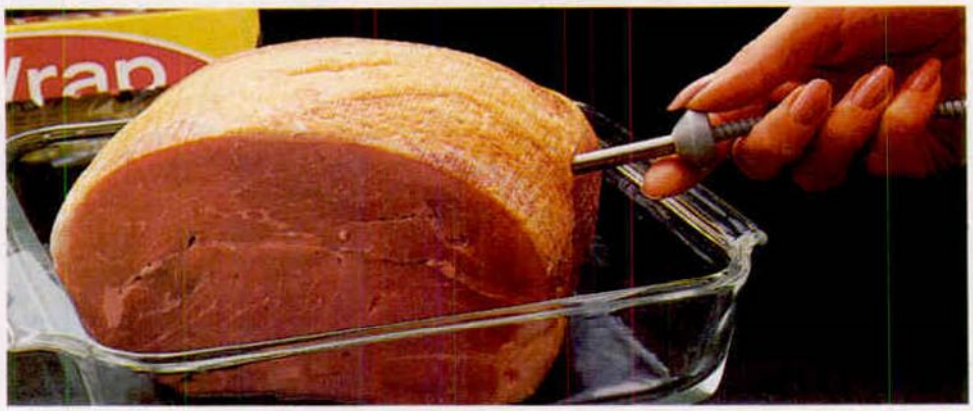
Canned ham
50% (Medium)
10-12 minutes per 450g / 1lb
54°C / 129°F internal temperature



How to microwave precooked ham

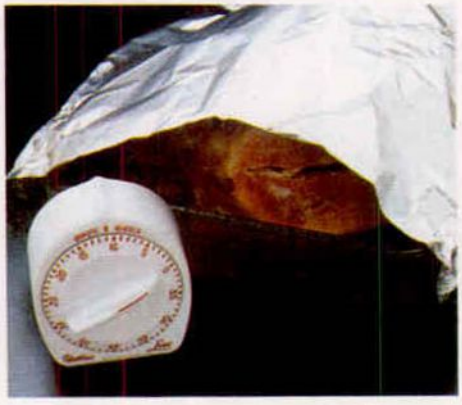


Place *the ham in a dish or on a roasting rack. Cover with cling film. shield any protruding edges with foil.*

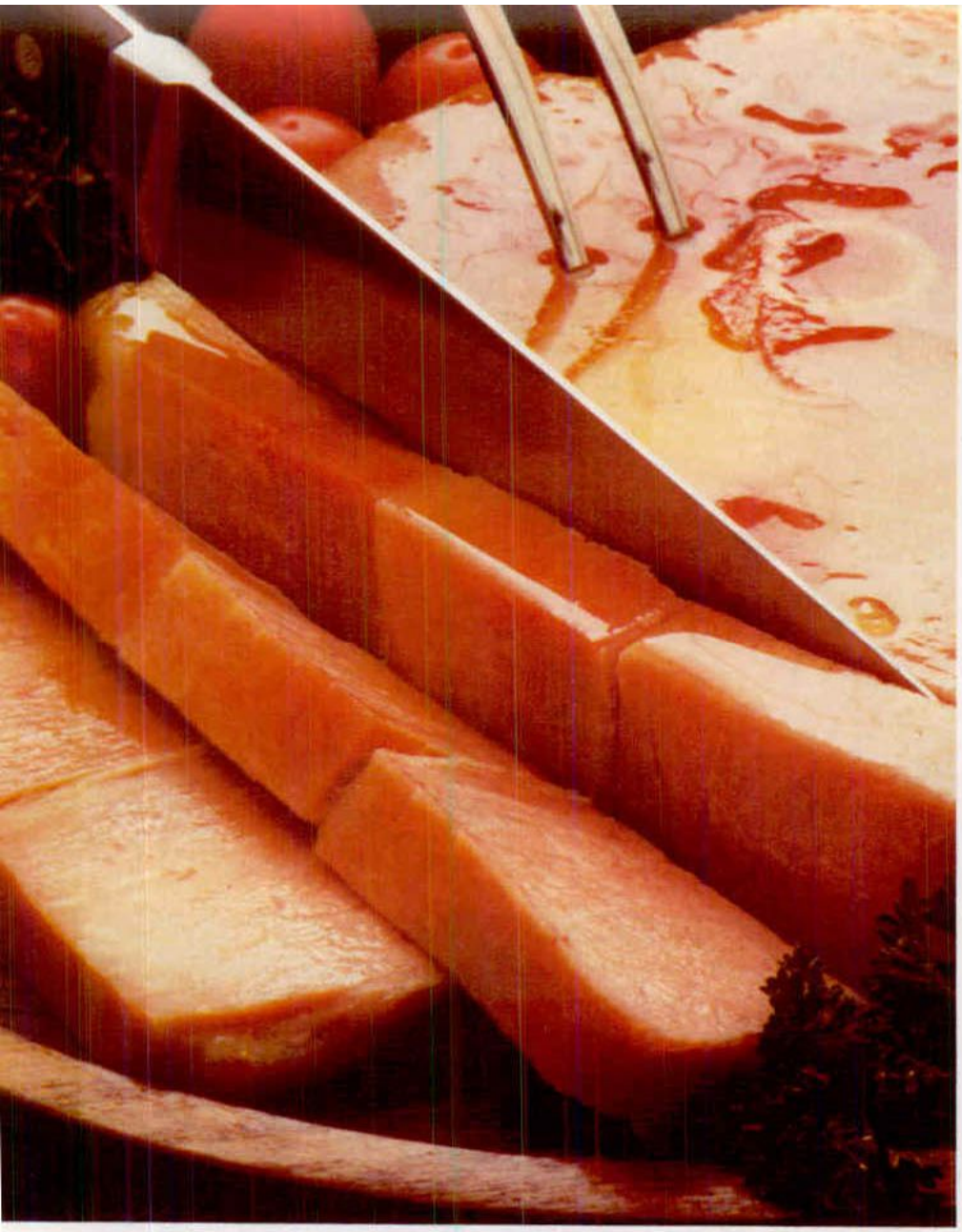


Insert *the microwave thermometer or temperature probe, if using, into the centre of the meat through the cling film. Do not use a conventional meat thermometer in the microwave cooker.*

Microwave *at 50% (Medium) for half the calculated cooking time. Turn the meat over and replace the foil shielding if needed. Check temperature with conventional thermometer, if using. Replace the cling film or roasting bag.*



Complete *cooking, then cover the ham loosely with foil, shiny side down, and stand for 5-10 minutes.*



Microwaving glazed ham

Glazes can be quickly prepared in only a couple of minutes; spread them over ham during the last 10 minutes of heating for a colourful sheen and added flavour. They are an easy way to turn this tasty meat into a special-occasion meal.

When heating ham joints with a glaze there is no need to shield protruding edges of meat with foil. Because of this, cooking times may be less than calculated, as there will be nothing to deflect the microwaves. For accuracy, use a probe or thermometer.

When you glaze a ham do not re-cover the meat, as the high temperature of the sugar may melt the wrapping.

Honey-glazed* ham

23½ mins

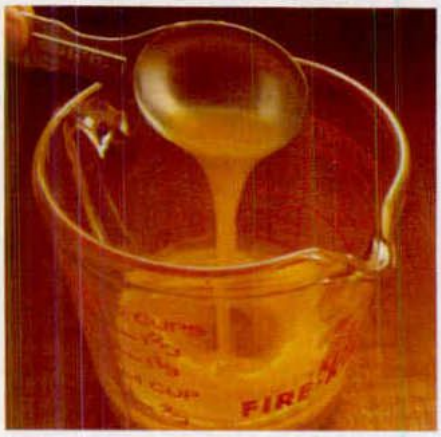
Standing time: 5-10 mins

900g / 2lb cooked ham, about 4cm / 1½in thick

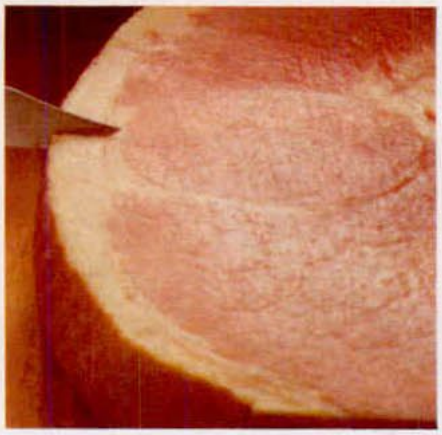
GLAZE
60ml / 4tbls clear honey
30ml / 2tbls orange juice
15ml / 1tbls vinegar
5ml / 1tsp cornflour

SERVES 4

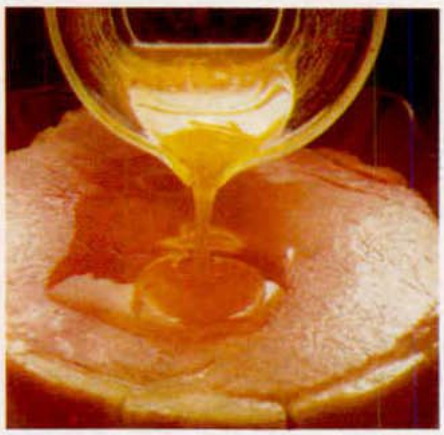
How to microwave Honey-glazed ham



Mix *the glaze ingredients together in a small container. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes, or until the mixture is slightly thickened. Stir after 1 minute and then when cooking is completed.*



Slash *the fat around the ham joint and put the meat into a 25 × 20cm / 10 × 8in dish. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge, or with a pierced roasting bag. Cook at 50% (Medium) for 12 minutes; drain off juices.*



Pour *the glaze over the ham and microwave, uncovered, at 50% (Medium) for 10-12 minutes, or until ham reaches the correct temperature. Cover the ham loosely with foil, and stand for 5-10 minutes.*

Ham glazes

Cranberry glaze

2 mins

Standing time: none

10ml / 2tsp cornflour
75ml / 5tbls apple juice
100g / 4oz cranberry sauce
45ml / 3tbls barbecue sauce

1 Blend the cornflour with the apple juice in a medium-sized bowl.
2 Stir in the remaining ingredients and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, until slightly thickened. Stir once during cooking and when cooking has finished.

Mustard glaze

75g / 3oz soft brown sugar
45ml / 3tbls made English mustard

1 Combine the sugar and mustard in a bowl and mix well.

Savoury apricot glaze

2 mins

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz apricot jam
100ml / 3½fl oz water
30ml / 2tbls gravy granules or ½ pkt gravy mix

1 Combine all the ingredients in a small bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes to melt the jam. Stir once during cooking and when cooking is completed.

Gammon with* pineapple

6 mins

Standing time: 3-5 mins

4 × 75g / 3oz bacon chops

SAUCE
60ml / 4tbls dry white wine
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
15ml / 1tbls dark soft brown sugar
10ml / 2tsp ground ginger
10ml / 2tsp Worcestershire sauce
5ml / 1tsp mustard powder
10ml / 2tsp cornflour
225g / 8oz can pineapple rings

SERVES 2-4

1 Combine all the sauce ingredients except the pineapple. Drain the juice from the pineapple and make up to 150ml / ¼pt with water. Stir into the sauce.
2 Snip the fat around the bacon chops, then arrange the chops in a dish in a single layer. Pour over the sauce and marinate, covered, for 8 hours or overnight, turning occasionally.
3 Cover and microwave the chops and sauce at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, until tender. Turning the chops over once.
4 Add the pineapple rings to the sauce, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute. Leave to stand, covered, for 3-5 minutes. Garnish with watercress sprigs.

Studded ham* or gammon

20 mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

1.5-1.8kg / 3-4lb cooked ham or gammon joint with fat
30ml / 2tbls soft dark brown sugar
cloves

FOR THE SPICED PEACHES
425g / 15oz can peach halves in light syrup
45ml / 3tbls white wine vinegar
30ml / 2tbls soft dark brown sugar
2.5cm / 1in piece of root ginger, peeled and crushed
6 allspice berries
2.5cm / 1in cinnamon stick

SERVES 6-8

1 Drain the peach syrup into a bowl and combine with the wine vinegar, sugar and spices. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Pour over the peaches, cover and soak overnight.
2 Remove any skin from the ham and use a sharp knife to score a diamond pattern into the fat.
3 Spoon 60ml / 4tbls of the spiced peach syrup over the scored fat. Press the sugar evenly over the surface and stud each diamond with a clove.
4 Microwave the joint, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 10 minutes, rotating half way through. Remove from the cooker, rotate the ham again and cover loosely with foil and leave to stand for 5-10 minutes.
5 Microwave the peaches and syrup in a covered bowl at 50% (Medium) for 5 minutes, until hot. Arrange around the joint.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND
Page 222 **Honey-glazed ham:** use ham steaks cut from leg or shoulder. Page 223 **Gammon with pineapple:** use ham steaks or bone-in smoked and cooked pork loin chops (from specialist shops). Microwave on 100% (High) until heated through, turning once. Page 224 **Studded ham; Ham with tomato sauce:** use bone-in leg or whole-muscle rolled leg.

Ham with* tomato sauce

24 mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

1.5kg / 3lb cooked ham joint

FOR THE SAUCE
1 large onion, finely chopped
30ml / 2tbls oil
800g / 1lb 12oz can chopped tomatoes
30ml / 2tbls tomato purée
2 celery stalks, finely chopped
1 carrot, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
large pinch of dried thyme
large pinch of dried basil
1 bay leaf
30ml / 2tbls finely chopped parsley
15ml / 1tbls sugar
50ml / 2fl oz red wine
salt
pepper

SERVES 6

1 Heat the jam joint following the step-by-step instructions on page 221. After standing time cover the ham securely with foil, shiny side against the meat for heat retention and make the sauce.
2 In a large casserole, combine the onion and oil. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes, or until the onions are tender.
3 Stir in the tomatoes, purée, celery, carrot, garlic, herbs and sugar. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, until the mixture boils.
4 Stir in the wine and season to taste. Microwave, uncovered, at 50% (Medium) for 15-18 minutes, until sauce is thick and pulpy.
5 Remove foil and slice the ham. Serve with the sauce.

Ham with Tomato Sauce

RAY DUNS

Tomatoes

Chopped, sliced, filled, puréed — tomatoes provide a host of possibilities for soups, sauces and easy mid-week meals. Cooked in the microwave, tempting dishes can be made in no time.

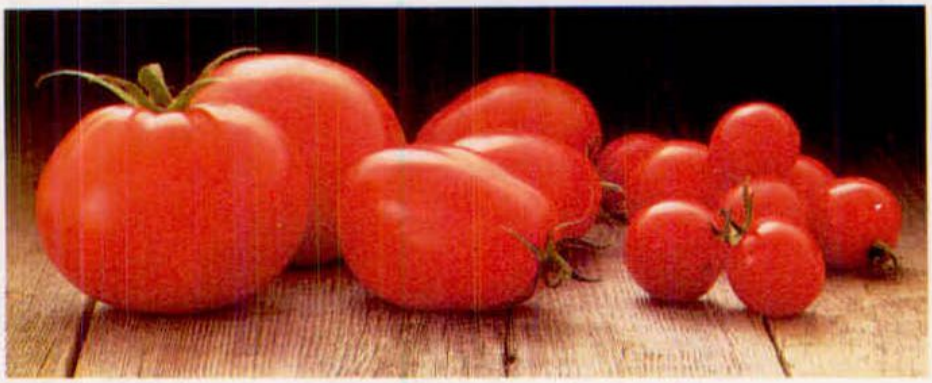
Tomatoes make an excellent soup or salad ingredient and are an essential addition to Italian sauces, to mention but a few of their uses. Cooking with fresh tomatoes gives a dish a truly fresh-tasting flavour, which the microwave actually enhances.

Available all year round, for peak flavour tomatoes should be bought when nearly ripe, and kept at room temperature. If chilled, they will ripen more slowly.

Cream Cheese Tomato Puffs

RAY DUNS

How to select and store tomatoes



Choose *plump tomatoes that are heavy for their size, firm to slightly soft, and well formed for their variety. Standard and cherry tomatoes are round. Pear-shaped plum tomatoes are meatiest and good for sauces. Tomatoes need not be fully red, but should be free from bruises, brown spots, scars or cracks. Tomatoes taste best when freshly picked from the garden.*

Refrigerate *fully ripe tomatoes, if necessary, and use within 3 days. Under-ripe tomatoes will ripen at room temperature. Do not leave in direct sunlight for too long.*

Cream of tomato soup

12½ mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb ripe tomatoes, chopped
½ onion, finely chopped
10ml / 2tsp sugar
1 bay leaf
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
15ml / 1tbls plain flour
275ml / ½pt milk
425ml / ¾pt boiling water
1 vegetable or chicken stock cube
45ml / 3tbls tomato purée
salt and pepper
60ml / 4tbls cream
chopped parsley (optional)

SERVES 4

1 Combine the tomatoes, onion, sugar and bay leaf in a small bowl. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5-8 minutes, stirring once. Sieve; place pulp aside.

2 Microwave the butter in a covered bowl at 100% (High) for 30-45 seconds. Blend in the flour and milk. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes, stirring once or twice. Mix in the tomato pulp.

3 Pour the boiling water onto the tomato purée and the stock cube. Stir then blend into the soup.

4 Season with salt and pepper. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes, stirring once; do not allow to boil. Ladle into dishes and swirl cream on top. Sprinkle with chopped parsley.

RAY DUNS

Stuffed tomatoes

5 mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb even-sized tomatoes (8 medium or 4 large)
100g / 4oz streaky bacon, chopped
½ small onion, finely chopped
1 celery stalk, finely chopped
75g / 3oz frozen peas
15ml / 1tbls fresh breadcrumbs
15ml / 1tbls hot water
15ml / 1tbls grated Parmesan or Cheddar cheese
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried thyme
salt and pepper

SERVES 4

1 Remove a thin slice from the stem end of each tomato. Scoop out the centre with a teaspoon to make tomato cups.
2 Combine the bacon, onion, celery and peas in a bowl, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes or until tender. Stir in the crumbs, water, cheese and thyme. Season well to taste.
3 Stand the tomato cups in a shallow dish, spoon in the stuffing. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 2-5 minutes until the tomatoes are hot, but not soft. Turn once.

Tomato and basil soup

11 mins

Standing time: none

This soup has a good strong flavour and is excellent served with warmed granary rolls.

45ml / 3tbls plain flour
150ml / ¼pt vegetable and tomato or tomato juice
175g / 6oz tomatoes, chopped
½ onion, finely chopped
2 celery stalks, finely chopped
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
5ml / 1tsp sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried basil
1 chicken stock cube
425ml / ¾pt boiling water
watercress sprigs, chives or parsley, to garnish

SERVES 2-3

1 Mix the flour in a bowl with 30ml / 2tbls cold water; blend in the juice, tomatoes, onion, celery, butter, sugar and basil. Dissolve the chicken stock cube in the boiling water and add to the tomato mixture. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge or a loose-fitting lid, and microwave at 100% (High) for 10-15 minutes until the mixture is slightly thickened; stir the soup every 5 minutes during the cooking time.
2 Press the soup through a fine sieve. Reheat at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes until piping hot. Serve each bowl garnished with a sprig of watercress, or scatter over some finely chopped chives or parsley.

Hot tomato vinaigrette

2 mins

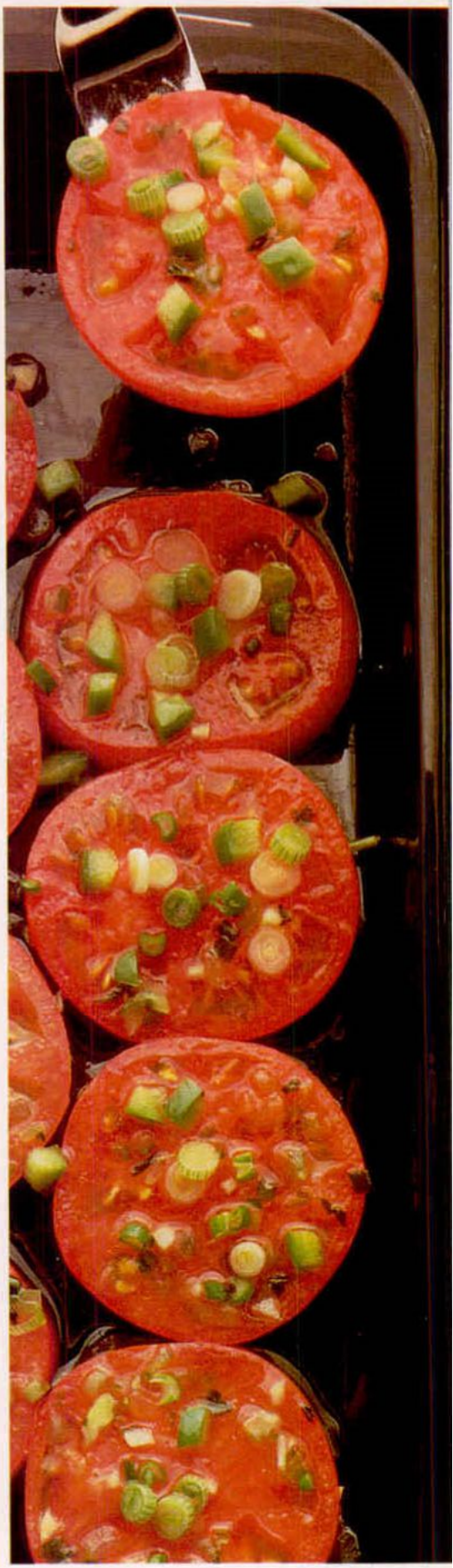
Standing time: none

450g / 1lb firm tomatoes, sliced 1cm / ½in thick
2-3 spring onions, chopped

DRESSING
120ml / 8tbls vegetable oil
45ml / 3tbls vinegar
30ml / 2tbls finely chopped green pepper
15ml / 1tbls sweet chutney
1 garlic clove, crushed
2.5ml / ½tsp dried oregano
salt and pepper

SERVES 4

1 Combine the ingredients for the dressing in a shallow dish. Stir briskly to blend and season well to taste. Add the sliced tomatoes, turning them to coat with the dressing. Cover; allow to marinate at room temperature for 2 hours.
2 Lift the tomatoes out of the dressing and arrange them in a single layer in a shallow dish; spoon over 30-45ml / 2-3tbls dressing and sprinkle with the chopped spring onion.
3 Cover the dish with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-4 minutes or until the tomatoes are hot but not cooked; turn the dish once during cooking.



Hot Tomato Vinaigrette

Italian sauce

20 mins

Standing time: none

This sauce is perfect for topping a made pizza base. Spread over pizza, place on a pizza browner or roasting rack. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5-8 minutes; turn once.

30ml / 2tbls vegetable oil
1 onion, chopped
2 celery stalks, thinly sliced
2 garlic cloves, crushed
½ small green pepper, chopped
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
450g / 1lb tomatoes, chopped
60ml / 4tbls tomato purée
60ml / 4tbls red wine, stock or water
5ml / 1tsp dried basil
5ml / 1tsp dried oregano
5ml / 1tsp dried marjoram
salt and pepper

MAKES 575ml / 1pt

1 In a 2L / 3½pt casserole, combine the oil, onion, celery, garlic and green pepper. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5-7 minutes or until the onion is tender. Stir once; drain.
2 Stir in the flour, then all the remaining ingredients. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 10 minutes, until mixture reaches desired consistency. Stir 2-3 times.

RAY DUNS

Tomato bake

8½ mins

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz streaky bacon, diced
2 celery stalks, chopped
½ small onion, chopped
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
450 / 1lb tomatoes, peeled and chopped (see Microtips right)
2 bread slices, diced
1 garlic clove, crushed
2.5ml / ½tsp dried oregano
salt and pepper
15ml / 1tbls finely grated cheese

SERVES 4

1 Microwave the bacon in a covered casserole at 100% (High) for 2-4 minutes until cooked.
2 Put the celery, onion and butter in an 850ml / 1½pt dish, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-4 minutes, or until vegetables are tender. Mix in the bacon, flour, tomatoes, bread, garlic, oregano and salt and pepper to taste. Lightly level the surface.
3 Microwave the tomato bake at 100% (High) for 4-6 minutes until thick and bubbling, stirring once or twice.
4 Remove the cover and sprinkle over the grated cheese. Microwave at 100% (High) for 30 seconds to just lightly melt the cheese before serving at the table.

Microtips

To peel tomatoes measure 700ml / 1¼pt water into a large microwave-safe bowl. Leave uncovered and microwave at 100% (High) for 9-10 minutes until the water is boiling. Alternatively, boil the water conventionally. Prick the tomatoes then place in the water. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30 seconds until the skins have loosened. Using a slotted spoon, remove the tomatoes from the boiling water and plunge in a bowl of cold water. The skins will peel away easily using a knife edge against the finger.

Cream cheese tomato puffs

4¼ mins

Standing time: none

Serve these as party snacks on their own or with Melba toast.

100g / 4oz streaky bacon, chopped
225g / 8oz cream cheese
5ml / 1tsp finely chopped onion
5ml / 1tsp baking powder
1 egg yolk
½ small green pepper, finely chopped
700g / 1½lb firm tomatoes (32 cherry or 16 small)

MAKES 32 MINI OR 16 SMALL PUFFS

How to microwave Cream cheese tomato puffs

Microwave *the bacon in a large, covered dish at 100% (High) for 2-4 minutes until cooked. Stir after half the cooking time to separate. Drain well.*

Place *the cream cheese in a bowl and microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 15 seconds to soften. Add the bacon, onion, baking powder and egg yolk. Using a wooden spoon, beat the mixture until well blended. Stir in the chopped pepper until well incorporated and set aside.*

Slice *the tops from the cherry tomatoes or cut the small ones in half. Scoop out the pulp and seeds and discard. Check the tomato cups will stand upright and fill each with the cheese mixture. Arrange half the tomatoes in a ring on a plate lined with absorbent paper, positioning 3-4 in the centre.*

RAY DUNS

Microwave *at 50% (Medium) for 1-3 minutes until the cheese is puffed and just dry on top; turn every 30 seconds. Repeat with the remaining tomatoes.*

Beef strips

Tender beef cut into thin, and uniformly-sized strips will cook quickly and evenly in the microwave and blend well with other ingredients for simple or sophisticated dishes.

Thin slices of beef cut from the tender steak cuts and from the less tender braising steak cuts, microwave well to make tasty, quick-cook dishes. Old favourites such as Beef Stroganoff and Chinese-style stir fry dishes can be made very successfully in your microwave.

Cook rice or noodles conventionally while the meat is microwaving or microwave a vegetable while the beef dish is standing.

Beef Stroganoff

Beef Stroganoff

45½ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

450g / 1lb mushrooms, sliced
1 large onion, chopped
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
700-900g / 1½-2lb rump, sirloin or porterhouse steak, in thin strips
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
500ml / 18fl oz hot beef stock
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
90ml / 6tbls tomato purée
10ml / 2tsp Worcestershire sauce
125ml / 4fl oz soured cream, plus extra to garnish
250ml / 9fl oz soured cream
chopped parsley, to garnish

SERVES 4-6

1 Combine the mushrooms, onion and butter or margarine in a 2.5L / 4½pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5½-6 minutes, or until vegetables are tender.
2 Toss the meat strips and flour together and stir into the vegetables with the stock, salt, purée and sauce. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
3 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 35 minutes, until the meat is tender. Stir half-way through cooking.
4 Blend in the remaining ingredients. Serve with a swirl of soured cream, sprinkled with parsley on a bed of noodles or rice. Leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Boeuf à la bourguignonne

43 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

A la bourguignonne means literally 'burgundy style'. Boeuf à la bourguignonne is a classic dish from this region of France. Mushrooms and onions are a regional garnish and the full bodied burgundy red wine is ideal for rich, flavourful sauces. Made in the microwave, it is trouble free and very tasty.

4 bacon rashers, quartered
700-900g / 1½-2lb sirloin, rump or porterhouse steak, in 6mm / ¼in strips
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
225g / 8oz mushrooms, sliced
4 small onions, chopped
1 carrot, chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
250ml / 9fl oz red burgundy
125ml / 4fl oz hot beef stock
15ml / 1tbls finely chopped fresh parsley
5ml / 1tsp salt
2.5ml / ½tsp dried thyme
1.5ml / ¼tsp pepper
1 bay leaf

SERVES 4-6

1 Place the bacon in a 2.5L / 4½pt casserole. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge, and microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes, stirring once.
2 Stir in the steak strips, sprinkle on the flour; toss to coat the meat evenly. Add the mushrooms, onion, carrot and garlic. Stir in the wine and hot beef stock then add all the herbs and seasonings. Cover the casserole tightly and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
3 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 35 minutes, or until the meat and vegetables are tender and the juices are thickened. Stir once after half the cooking time.
4 Leave to stand, covered, for 10 minutes. Serve the casserole with a seasonal green vegetable and potatoes — new potatoes boiled in their skins are especially nice. Or for a summer lunch serve with a crisp green salad.

Microtips

You can, if you wish, replace the sirloin, rump or porterhouse steak in these recipes with less expensive braising steak such as chuck or blade. They will take longer to cook but will taste just as good.

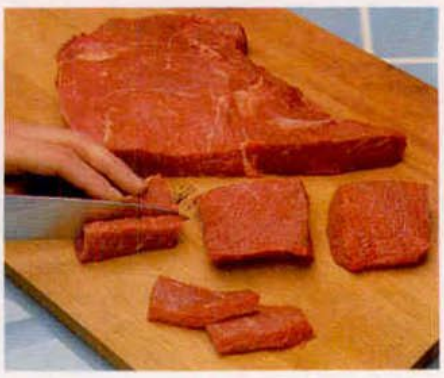
● *To cut braising steak into strips, follow the step-by-step instructions below: first trimming the steak of any fat or gristle. Partially frozen beef may be slightly easier to cut than fresh or fully thawed meat.*

● *To tenderize this less tender cut of beef, microwave for the initial few minutes at 100% (High) and then reduce to 50% (Medium) and cook for 55-60 minutes, or at 30% (Low) for 90-100 minutes.*

How to cut beef strips

Slice *lean, tender fillets crosswise into 12mm / ½in rounds, then cut across the grain into 6mm / ¼in strips.*

Slice *rump across the grain into 6mm / ¼in strips, then cut into 5cm / 2in pieces.*



Trim *and cut braising steak into 5cm / 2in squares then slice across the grain into 6mm / ¼in strips.*

RAY DUNS

Stir-fried beef and mange tout

5 mins

Standing time: none

Authentic tasting stir fry dishes can be made in the microwave. Little fat is needed, a marinade and browning dish colour the meat. All you have to do is stir the food 3 times during cooking.

450g / 1lb sirloin, porterhouse or fillet steak, in 6mm / ¼in strips, 5cm / 2in long
225g / 8oz mushrooms, sliced
200g / 7oz pkt frozen mange tout, thawed in their packet at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes

MARINADE
65ml / 2½fl oz soy sauce
15ml / 1tbls cornflour
30ml / 2tbls vegetable oil
2.5cm / 1in root ginger, grated or 5ml / 1tsp ground ginger
1 garlic clove, crushed

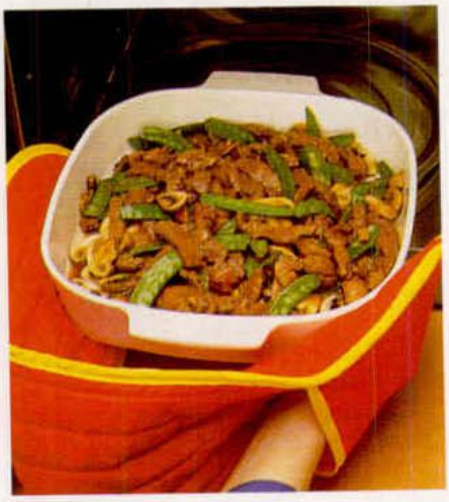
SERVES 4

VARIATION
For Stir-fried steak with pepper, replace the mushrooms and mange tout with 1 large green or red pepper, cut into 6mm / ¼in strips and 1 onion, sliced and separated into rings. Microwave for the same amount of time.

How to microwave Stir-fried beef and mange tout

Combine *the marinade ingredients. Stir in the meat making sure it is well coated. Marinate at room temperature for 20-30 minutes.*

Heat *a 25cm / 10in browning dish at 100% (High) for 5 minutes (or according to manufacturer's instructions). Stir in meat and marinade.*



Add *remaining ingredients; stir well. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5-6 minutes, until vegetables are al dente and the meat is done. Stir 3 times.*

RAY DUNS

Left: *Stir-Fried Beef and Mange Tout;* **Above:** *Saucy Beef with Dumplings.*

Saucy beef with dumplings

43 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

700g / 1½lb topside or frying steak, in 6mm / ¼in strips
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
2 celery stalks, thinly sliced
400g / 14oz can tomatoes
40g / 1½oz pkt onion soup
125ml / 4fl oz water
100g / 4oz Cheddar cheese, grated
paprika for sprinkling

DUMPLINGS
75g / 3oz self-raising flour
40g / 1½oz shredded beef suet or block margarine, grated
salt and pepper

SERVES 4-6

1 Toss the beef and flour together in a 2.5L / 4½pt casserole. Add the celery, tomatoes, soup mix and water. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
2 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 20 minutes, or until the mixture thickens. Stir.
3 Combine the dumpling ingredients with just enough cold water to form a soft dough. Drop spoonfuls onto the meat mixture. Microwave, uncovered, at 50% (Medium) for 18-20 minutes, or until the dumplings are set.
4 Sprinkle the grated cheese over the dumplings and leave, covered, for 5 minutes.

Barbecue beef

35 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

700g / 1½lb topside or frying steak, in 6mm / ¼in strips
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
100g / 4oz carrots, thinly sliced
1 onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
175ml / 6fl oz water
100g / 4oz tomato ketchup
50g / 2oz light soft brown sugar
30ml / 2tbls vinegar
15ml / 1tbls Worcestershire sauce
5ml / 1tsp salt
1.5ml / ¼tsp pepper

SERVES 4-6

1 Toss the beef and flour together in a 2.5L / 4½pt casserole. Add the remaining ingredients and cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
2 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 30-35 minutes, until meat is tender. Stir halfway through cooking.
3 Leave to stand, covered, for 10 minutes. Serve with rice.

Beef and rice pilaff

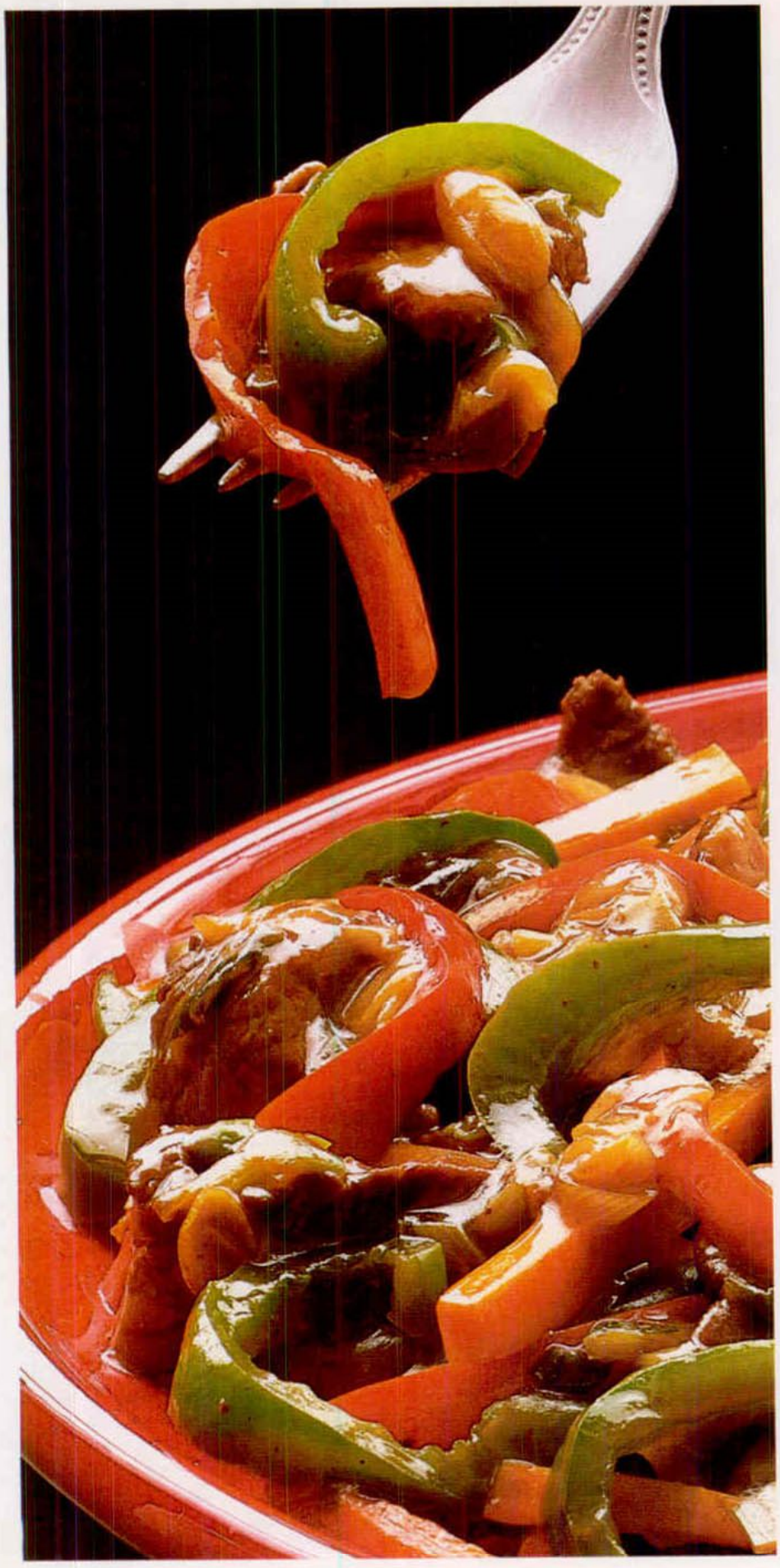
35 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

450g / 1lb topside beef or frying steak, in 6mm / ¼in strips
400g / 14oz long grain rice
300ml / 11fl oz water
300g / 11oz can beef broth
1 onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
200g / 7oz can sliced mushrooms, drained
15ml / 1tbls parsley
salt and pepper
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried basil

SERVES 4-6

1 Mix all ingredients in a 2.5L / 4½pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
2 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium). Microwave for 30-35 minutes, until the meat is tender and the water absorbed. Stir halfway through cooking.
3 Stand, covered, for 10 minutes.



Beef with peppers

9 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

This quick and easy dish is an ideal meal to make for just one or two.

15ml / 1tbls soft brown sugar
1 garlic clove, crushed
45ml / 3tbls water
30ml / 2tbls soy sauce
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
225g / 8oz sirloin or fillet steak, in 6mm / ¼in strips
2 spring onions, sliced diagonally
1 carrot, cut in matchstick strips
1 green pepper, in 6mm / ¼in strips
½ red pepper, in 6mm / ¼in strips
7.5ml / 1½tsp cornflour

SERVES 2

1 In a small bowl, mix the sugar, garlic, water, soy sauce and lemon juice. Stir in the meat, making sure it is well coated. Cover and marinate at room temperature for 30 minutes or refrigerate for 1 hour.

2 Combine the spring onions, carrot, green and red pepper in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Remove the meat from the marinade and add the marinade to the vegetables. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes, stirring after 2 minutes. Add the meat.

3 Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes, or until cooked, stirring 3 times. Drain off the liquid into a 575ml / 1pt jug. Cover the meat and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

4 Meanwhile, stir the cornflour into the liquid until smooth. Microrowave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes, or until thickened. Stir twice. Pour over the beef and vegetables.

Freezer notes

If you are only cooking for one, freeze one serving for up to 2 weeks. To thaw and then reheat, microwave at 70% (Medium-High) for 5-6 minutes, stirring halfway through cooking.

TV Dinner

A microwave cooker and a freezer are the perfect partners in a busy household. Plan ahead, then enjoy a relaxing evening in front of the television with a TV dinner — the complete meal-in-a-tray.

Quick to reheat in the microwave and trouble-free to serve and eat, the TV dinner is perfect for modern needs. It conjures up impromptu meals that can be reheated by anyone in the household, quick snacks before or after a journey, or simply a lazy Saturday high tea in front of the television.

When you plan your main dishes, think of them as TV dinners too — either to be eaten on the day they are made, or specially frozen in a compartmented tray, together with complementary vegetables and a dessert for later use. This ingenious idea can be extended by clever variations. Here, for example, the delicate flavour of the Rice-stuffed Chicken marries beautifully with the accompanying carrots and Brussels sprouts, but the chicken could equally well be served with French beans and sweetcorn, and the Individual Apple Crumbles could be made with any fruit of your choice. Just make up the trays as you wish and freeze until required. The scope for variations is endless and conveniently creates a whole range of new meals.

Whenever you have a spare moment, make up some trays for this purpose, then you will have no more worries about getting home in time to make supper. Children, too, will find it easy — and fun — to heat up their own meals in the microwave. Nothing could be simpler than putting a tray in the cooker, microwaving it, then thawing and reheating the dessert while eating the main course.

Just see for yourself how easy it is to enjoy a relaxed evening at home with a prepared meal from the freezer-to-microwave-to-lap in just a matter of minutes.

Rice-stuffed Chicken and Individual Apple Crumbles

RAY DUNS

Rice-stuffed chicken

10¾ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

4 boneless chicken breast fillets, about 100g / 4oz each, skinned

STUFFING
50g / 2oz mushrooms, chopped
50g / 2oz butter, softened
30ml / 2tbls pine kernels
1 spring onion, chopped
15ml / 1tbls chopped parsley
pinch of dried rosemary, crushed
pinch of dried tarragon
pepper
40g / 1½oz long grain rice, cooked

COATING
1 egg, beaten
15ml / 1tbls milk
50g / 2oz dried breadcrumbs

SERVES 4

1 Place the chicken breasts between 2 sheets of cling film or greaseproof paper and beat until 6mm / ¼in thick.
2 In a small bowl, combine all the stuffing ingredients except the rice. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds, or until the butter has melted. Stir in the rice, making sure it is completely coated in butter mixture.
3 Divide the stuffing equally between the chicken, spooning it near one end of each breast. Roll up, folding in sides to neaten edges.
4 In a small bowl, mix the egg and milk, then brush onto chicken breasts. Season the breadcrumbs then roll the breasts in them, making sure they are well coated.
5 Cook and freeze as TV dinners, see steps, or freeze individually, join side down, on greaseproof paper. Wrap individually, label and freeze for up to 6 months.

To serve
If serving separately, without vegetables, unwrap the chicken breasts and arrange in a circle on a plate. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for about 15 minutes, or until the chicken and stuffing are heated through. Test by piercing with a knife, if this comes out hot, the chicken is heated through to the centre. Rearrange the breasts twice during cooking. Cover loosely with foil and leave to stand for 5 minutes before serving.

Above: *Rice-Stuffed Chicken*
Right: *Individual Apple Crumbles*

How to freeze and serve Rice-stuffed chicken for a TV dinner

To cook, *cover and microwave the 4 stuffed breasts at 50% (Medium) for 10 minutes, rearranging once. Let stand for 3 minutes; allow to cool.*

To freeze, *place on individual freezer /microwave trays and add to each 75g / 3oz frozen sprouts and 75g / 3oz frozen carrots. Wrap, label and freeze.*

To serve, *cover and microwave each tray at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes until heated through, turning once. Let stand 3 minutes.*

Individual apple crumbles

4½ mins

Standing time: none

These apple crumbles are cooked before freezing, so may either be served straight from the microwave, or frozen then thawed and reheated when needed.

350g / 12oz cooking apples, peeled, cored and sliced
15ml / 1tbls sugar
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice

TOPPING
75g / 3oz plain wholewheat flour
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground cinnamon
7.5ml / 1½tsp demerara sugar
40g / 1½oz butter or margarine, softened

SERVES 4

1 Stir the apple slices with the sugar and lemon juice in a large casserole; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2½-3½ minutes until almost tender, stirring once.
2 Divide the apples between 4 freezer/microwave ramekins.
3 Mix the flour, cinnamon and sugar in a bowl. Rub in the butter until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Divide the mixture into 4 portions and spread evenly over the apple mixture.
4 Arrange the ramekins in a circle in the cooker and microwave as directed, right. Allow to cool before freezing. Wrap and freeze.

RAY DUNS

Freezing and serving Apple crumbles

To cook, *cover and microwave the assembled apple crumbles at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, rotating ramekins ½ turn after half time.*

To freeze *the crumbles, wrap individually in cling film. Place all together in a freezer bag, label and freeze for up to 3 months.*

To serve, *remove from bag, pierce cling film and microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 5 minutes. Then microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes.*

30 minute casseroles

When time is short and you've a hungry family to feed, you'll need some tasty casserole recipes at your fingertips that take only 30 minutes — or less — to prepare from start to finish.

Here's a selection of protein-rich casseroles (most cook-in-one-pot) that are versatile enough to please everyone and require only a simple salad or crusty bread accompaniment.

Keep a well stocked larder and refrigerator and make the most of convenience foods; items like canned soups and sauces, tuna, rice and pasta, plus fresh produce all help give an assortment of quick, tasty main meals.

Make up your own 'quickie' casseroles too, using a quantity of minced beef and a can of your favourite sauce (see chart on page 241 for quantities and times).

From left to right: *Chilli Bake, Tuna Rice Casserole, Frankfurter Bean Casserole, Chicken à la King*

Chilli bake

11 mins

Standing time: none

Crushed corn chips and grated cheese make this beef and chilli mixture extra special.

450g / 1lb lean minced beef
30ml / 2tbls dried onion flakes
425g / 15oz can red kidney beans, drained
425g / 15oz can sieved tomatoes
140g / 4½oz can tomato purée
7.5ml / 1½tsp chilli powder
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
100g / 4oz corn chips, crushed
50g / 2oz mature Cheddar cheese, grated

SERVES 4

1 Crumble the minced beef into a 2.3L / 4pt casserole and stir in the onion flakes. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes, or until meat is no longer pink, stirring after half the time. Drain.

2 Stir in the kidney beans, sieved tomatoes, tomato purée, chilli powder and salt. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 6-7 minutes, or until heated through.

3 Sprinkle half the corn chips into a 20cm / 8in round baking dish. Spoon meat mixture over chips. Top with the remaining corn chips. Sprinkle with the grated cheese. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute, or until the cheese melts.

4 Serve hot, on its own or with crusty bread and a tossed mixed salad, if wished.

Tuna rice casserole

23¼ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

75g / 3oz cream cheese
295g / 10.4oz can mushroom soup
175g / 6oz long-grain rice, cooked (see chart, page 249)
200g / 7oz can tuna, drained and coarsely flaked
200g / 7oz can sliced mushrooms, drained
3 spring onions, chopped
15ml / 1tbls chopped parsley
45ml /3tbls grated Parmesan cheese

SERVES 4-6

1 Soften the cream cheese in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole at 100% (High) for 15-20 seconds. Blend in the soup, rice, tuna, mushrooms, onions and parsley.
2 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Stir well. Sprinkle with the cheese and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes.

Frankfurter bean casserole

11½ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

1 onion, chopped
1 clove garlic, crushed
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
450g / 16oz can baked beans
450g / 16oz can lima beans, drained
425g / 15oz can red kidney beans, drained
50g / 2oz soft light brown sugar
100g / 4oz jar tomato sauce
15ml / 1tbls made English mustard
350-450g / 12-16oz frankfurters, quartered

SERVES 4-6

1 Combine onion, garlic and butter in a 2.5L / 4½pt casserole. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes, until the onions are soft and translucent.
2 Add the remaining ingredients to the casserole, pushing frankfurters to the bottom of the dish so they are buried under the beans. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 10-12 minutes, until heated through, stirring after half the time. Let stand for 5 minutes.

Chicken à la King

6½ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

50g / 2oz butter or margarine
45ml / 3tbls plain flour
375g / 13oz can chicken and vegetable broth
200ml / 7fl oz milk
350g / 12oz cooked chicken, cubed
salt and pepper
100g / 4oz cooked or canned peas
200g / 7oz can sliced mushrooms, drained

SERVES 4

1 In a 1.7L / 3pt covered casserole, melt the butter at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds. Blend in the flour.
2 Add the chicken broth and

CHRIS KING

milk; stir well. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes, or until thickened, stirring twice during cooking.
3 Mix in the remaining ingredients. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, or until heated through. Serve with triangles of toast.

Chicken casserole

18 mins

Standing time: none

275g / 10oz packet frozen mixed vegetables
350g / 12oz cooked chicken, cubed
75g / 3oz Cheddar cheese, grated
45ml / 3tbls fresh breadcrumbs
salt and pepper

SAUCE
295g / 10.4oz can cream of chicken soup
125ml / 4fl oz mayonnaise
100g / 4oz walnuts, chopped (optional)
7.5ml / 1½tsp lemon juice
2.5ml / ½tsp prepared English mustard
1.5ml / ¼tsp curry powder

SERVES 4-6

1 Combine the sauce ingredients well together. Make a small hole in the packet of frozen vegetables and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until thawed. Drain.
2 In a 1.4L / 2½pt casserole, layer the vegetables, half the chicken, half the sauce mixture and half the cheese. Repeat layering in this way with the remaining ingredients, except the breadcrumbs and seasoning.
3 Cover the dish with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 9 minutes, rotating the dish after half the cooking time.
4 Season the breadcrumbs with salt and pepper and sprinkle on top of the casserole. Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave, uncovered, for 6 minutes, or until heated through.

Chicken Casserole

Tuna noodle casserole

7½ mins

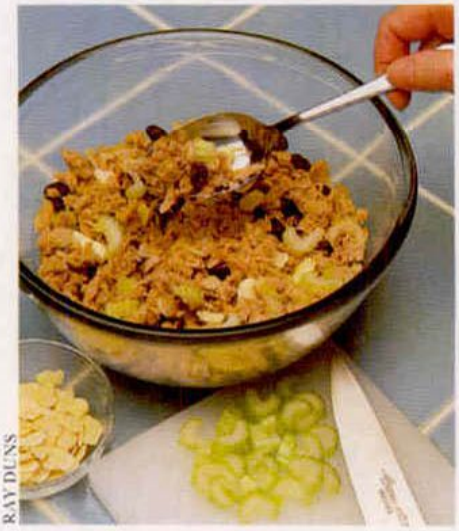
Standing time: none

Sure to be popular — this tasty recipe is quick to prepare from store-cupboard standbys. It makes a perfect supper dish for unexpected guests.

1 small onion, chopped
2 celery stalks, sliced thinly
2 × 200g / 7oz cans tuna, drained
50g / 2oz flaked almonds
50g / 2oz raisins
pepper
10ml / 2tsp lemon juice
275g / 10oz tagliatelle noodles, cooked

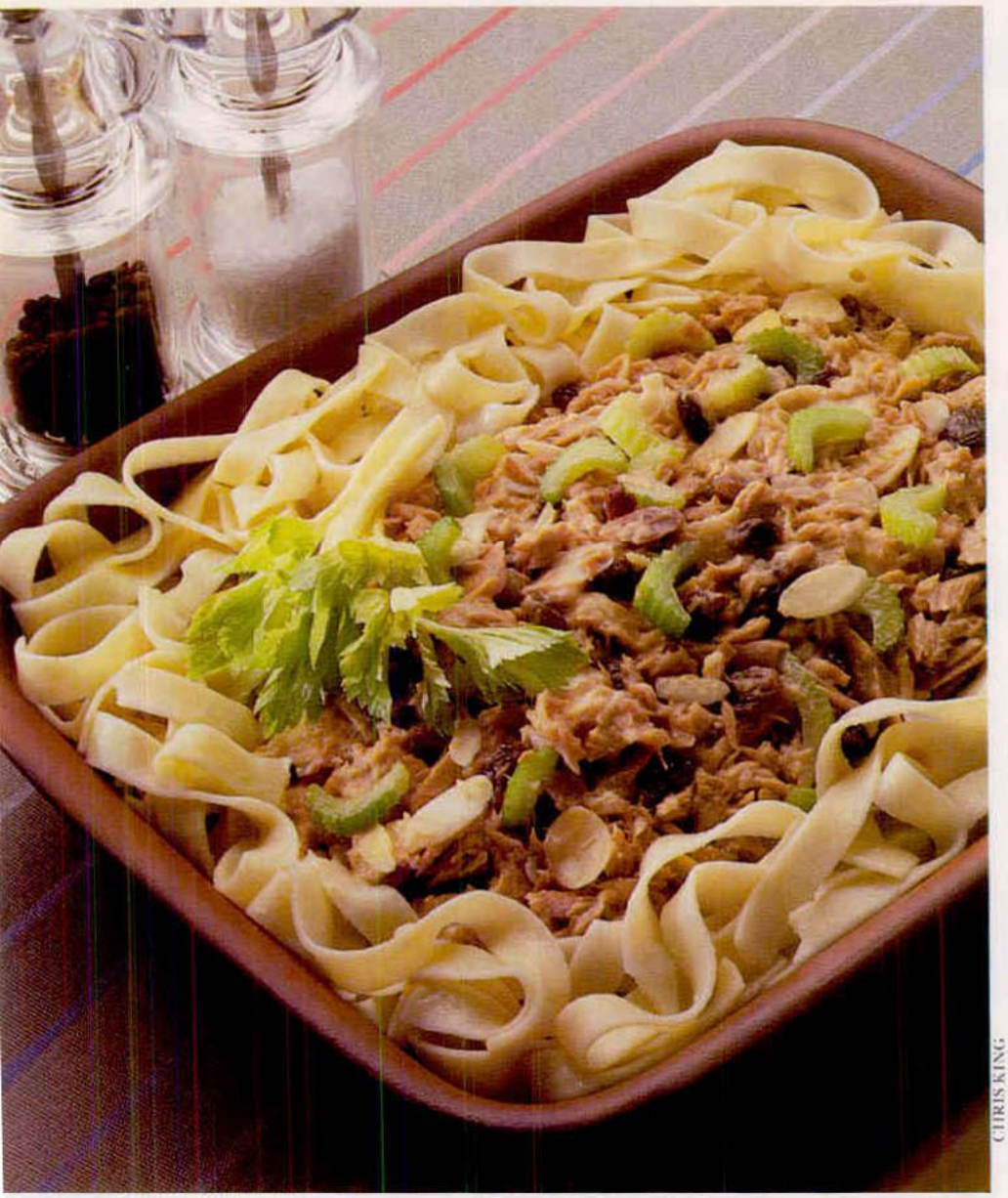
SERVES 4

How to microwave Tuna noodle casserole


RAY DUNS

Place *onion and celery in a large bowl, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1½ minutes. Stir in remaining ingredients, except the noodles. Cover and microwave for 2-3 minutes, stirring twice.*

Arrange *the cooked noodles in a serving dish, creating a well in the centre. Spoon tuna mixture into centre. Cover and microwave for 4-5 minutes until heated through. Garnish with celery leaves.*



CHRIS KING

German-style casserole

14 mins

Standing time: none

3 new potatoes, each weighing 100g / 4oz, cut into 1cm / ½in cubes
30ml / 2tbls water
30ml / 2tbls mayonnaise
5ml / 1tsp fresh chopped parsley
10ml / 2tsp Dijon mustard
2.5ml / ½tsp vinegar
salt and pepper
225g / 8oz boiling sausage ring

SERVES 2-3

1 Put the water in an 850ml / 1½pt casserole; add potatoes, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, or until fork tender, stirring once. Drain well.
2 In a small bowl, combine the mayonnaise, parsley, mustard, vinegar and salt and pepper. Stir in the potatoes.
3 Place the boiling sausage on a 18cm /7in pie plate and cut diagonally every 5cm / 2in to a depth of 6mm / ¼in. Place the potato salad in the centre of the boiling sausage. Cover the pie plate with baking parchment or greaseproof paper.
4 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 9-10 minutes, or until heated through, rotating ½ turn twice.

Tuna Noodle Casserole

How to microwave Quickie savoury mince casseroles

A simple casserole can be made in minutes, using a quantity of lean minced beef and a can of cook-in style sauce (curry; sweet and sour; tomato and onion). For 2 servings, use 450g / 1lb minced beef and a 375g / 13oz can of sauce, and for 4 servings, 900g / 2lb minced beef and 2 × 375g / 13oz cans of sauce.

Quickie casseroles

Beef amount	Dish-size	100%-(High)
450g / 1lb	1.7L / 3pt	4-5 mins
900g / 2lb	2.3L / 4pt	8-9 mins

Crumble *the lean minced beef into the casserole (see quantity of meat and casserole size given in chart, left). Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes for 450g / 1lb; 6 minutes for 900g / 2lb until the beef is no longer pink, stirring every 2 minutes.*

Drain *off the fat. Stir in the canned sauce of your choice (ie sweet and sour; tomato and onion; curry). Microwave, covered, at 100% (High) for the time stated in chart, stirring after half the time, until cooked and heated through.*

Sweet treats

Making tempting sweets is simplicity itself — chocolate, caramels and sugar mixtures melt perfectly without fear of scorching, so you can combine any number of textures and flavours.

Those with a sweet tooth will be pleased to know that microwaving is the ideal way to melt or boil sweets, with no sugary pans or burning, whereas conventional sweet making is a time-consuming, messy performance as direct heat on sugar mixtures makes them liable to burn.

Use conventional tests to check the stages of sugar boiling; drop a little of the mixture into cold water to check for 'hard or soft' ball stages (see page 244). Mixtures will boil more quickly in the microwave cooker than by conventional heating, so check frequently to ensure you do not over-cook.

Coconut caramel roll

5 mins

Standing time: none

225g / 8oz caramel toffees
50g / 2oz butter
30ml / 2tbls cream
225g / 8oz icing sugar
150g / 5oz salted peanuts
175g / 6oz marshmallows, quartered
75g / 3oz desiccated coconut

MAKES 48

1 Place the caramels, butter and cream in a large bowl. Microwave, uncovered at 50% (Medium) for 5 minutes, until melted.
2 Stir in the icing sugar, then the peanuts, mixing thoroughly. Fold in the marshmallows gently.
3 Sprinkle the coconut over 2 sheets of non-stick paper. Spoon half the mixture onto each piece.
4 Shape each half into a 30cm / 12in roll, coating all over with coconut. Wrap each roll in cling film and chill.
5 When firm, slice each roll into 24 even slices.

VARIATION
Substitute any variety of nuts for this recipe — try roughly-chopped hazelnuts, pieces of walnut or lightly-roasted almonds.

Coffee or chocolate-flavoured caramels make an interesting change — both will combine well with nuts and marshmallows.

Left to right: *Coconut Caramel Roll, Fruit Nut Clusters, Turkish Delight.*

Fruit and nut clusters

1½ mins

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz plain chocolate
15ml / 1tbls clear honey
75g / 3oz raisins

MAKES 8-10

1 Mix the chocolate and honey together in a bowl and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 1½-2 minutes, stirring once. Stir in the raisins. Place spoonfuls of the mixture on non-stick papers to set.

VARIATIONS

CHERRY NUT CLUSTERS Add 15g / ½oz butter to the chocolate, microwave to melt, then stir in 50g / 2oz chopped glacé cherries and 45ml / 3tbls chopped hazelnuts.

SULTANA ALMOND CLUSTERS Add 15g / ½oz butter to the chocolate, microwave as above then add 50g / 2oz sultanas and 45ml / 3tbls finely-chopped almonds.

RAY DUNS

Turkish delight

13 mins

Standing time: none

700g / 1½lb sugar
grated zest and juice of 1 lemon
grated zest and juice of 1 orange
150ml / ¼pt water
45ml / 3tbls powdered gelatine (or 3 sachets)
90ml / 6tbls water
red food colouring
50g / 2oz icing sugar

MAKES 49 SQUARES

1 Place the sugar, lemon and orange zest and juice in a large ovenproof bowl with the 150ml / ¼pt water.

2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 8 minutes. Stir every 2 minutes until the sugar is completely dissolved. Microwave for a further 5-10 minutes or until the syrup reaches soft ball stage (see page 244).

3 Soak the gelatine in the water until spongy, then stir into the hot syrup. Stir well until dissolved then add colouring to taste.

4 Dampen a 18cm / 7in square tin with water and pour in the mixture. Leave to chill overnight or until fully set.

5 Sprinkle a clean, dry surface with icing sugar and turn the Turkish delight out onto it. Cut into 49 even squares using a sharp knife. Coat each piece thoroughly with icing sugar and leave exposed to the air until the outsides dry.

VARIATION

To make crème de menthe delight, add 65ml / 2½fl oz water to the sugar in place of the fruit juices and zest. Substitute 45ml / 3tbls crème de menthe and green food colouring for the red colouring, and add them after stirring in the gelatine.

Cook's notes

Always ensure that the sugar has dissolved before the mixture comes to the boil.

Don't stir during remaining cooking time once it has boiled or it will crystallize.

Sugar boiling tests

The following tests are an accurate guide to the stage a boiling sugar mixture has reached, if you do not have a sugar thermometer.

Soft ball stage
Drop a small amount of the sugar mixture into a bowl of iced water. If it has reached 116°C / 240°F, the mixture will form a soft ball.

Hard ball stage
When tested as before, if the mixture has reached 126°C / 260°F, it will form a hard ball.

Hard crack stage
When tested as before, if it has reached 154°C / 310°F, it will form brittle threads.

DON LAST

Coconut ice

11 mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb sugar
150ml / ¼pt milk
150g / 5oz desiccated coconut
red food colouring

MAKES 49 SQUARES

How to microwave Coconut ice

Line *an 18cm / 7in square tin with non-stick paper. Dissolve the sugar in the milk, then microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, stirring every minute so as to make sure that all the sugar has dissolved before the syrup begins to boil.*

Remove *the bowl from the microwave and stir well, then microwave for a further 6-8 minutes, to reach the soft ball stage, (see sugar boiling information above). Stir in the coconut. Mix well, then pour half of the mixture into the prepared tin.*

Colour *the remaining mixture pink. Pour the second half over the white layer and leave until cool and half set. Mark the Coconut ice into 49 × 2.5cm / 1in squares. Leave until fully set, then cut into even pieces. Store in an airtight container.*

Chocolate marshmallows

1 min

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz chocolate chips
50g / 2oz butter
50g / 2oz chopped mixed nuts
20 large marshmallows

MAKES 20

1 Place the chocolate chips and butter in a small bowl, cover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 1-2 minutes, until the chips look shiny and soft. Stir until smooth.
2 Place the nuts in a shallow dish. Spear each marshmallow with a cocktail stick, then dip each one in the melted chocolate to coat it completely. Roll each coated marshmallow in the nuts so that the sides and base are coated. Put aside to set on non-stick paper.

Cherry nougat

11 mins

Standing time: none

225g / 8oz sugar
90ml / 6tbls liquid glucose
30ml/ 2tbls golden syrup
22.5ml / 1½tbls water
1 egg white
2.5ml / ½tsp vanilla flavouring
50g / 2oz butter, diced
25g / 1oz whole blanched almonds, toasted
50g / 2oz glacé cherries, quartered

MAKES 45 PIECES

1 Place the sugar, glucose and syrup in a large bowl with the water. Leave uncovered and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Stir thoroughly every minute. Make sure the sugar has dissolved before the mixture boils. (If necessary, remove bowl from the cooker and stir to dissolve).
2 Boil the mixture for 5-8 minutes at 100% (High), until it reaches the hard ball stage (see sugar boiling tests, page 244).
3 Beat the egg white until very stiff, then pour a quarter of the hot syrup onto the white in a thin stream, beating continously. Continue to beat until the mixture cools slightly and holds its shape.
4 Return the remaining syrup to the cooker. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-3 minutes, until the hard crack stage is reached. Pour this mixture in a thin stream over the egg white mixture, beating until thick.
5 Add the vanilla and butter, beating until thick. Stir in the almonds and cherries. Pour into an 18cm / 7in square tin lined with non-stick paper to set and cool. Chill thoroughly before serving the nougat.
6 When firm, turn the nougat out onto a board, remove the non-stick paper and cut the nougat into oblong pieces. Wrap in cellophane, store in the refrigerator.

RAY DUNS

Chocolate Marshmallows and Cherry Nougat

Cook's notes

- *The bowl in which sugar mixtures are microwaved will get very hot, so it is essential to use oven proof glass, and always remember to use oven gloves when handling dishes during sweet making.*
- *When testing to see what stage a boiling mixture has reached, do not continue to microwave while you test, as mixtures can overcook very quickly.*
- *If you use a sugar thermometer, always remove it before continuing to microwave. It should not be put in the microwave.*

STAR RECIPE

Sole parcels in wine sauce

Tender fillets of sole, stuffed with ham and avocado are coated in a creamy wine sauce. Add a pretty piped potato border for a superb special occasion dish that cooks beautifully in the microwave.

Here's a foolproof dinner party dish for four people that is quick to make and sure to be a mouthwatering success. Team it with a crisp mixed salad or seasonal vegetable accompaniment, if preferred.

The piped potato border could be prepared several hours in advance, leaving the stuffed fish fillets and the sauce to cook in just 11½ minutes before serving time.

RAY DUNS

Sole parcels in wine sauce

23 mins

Standing time: none

700g / 1½lb potatoes, peeled and cut into very thin slices
30ml / 2tbls water
75g / 3oz butter
salt and pepper
60ml / 4tbls double cream
15ml / 1tbls chopped parsley
4 lemon sole fillets, skinned
4 thin slices ham, halved
1 avocado, peeled, and quartered
1 shallot, finely chopped
20ml / 4tsp lemon juice
60ml / 4tbls dry white wine
150ml / ¼pt chicken stock
30ml / 2tbls plain flour

How to microwave Sole parcels in wine sauce

Put *sliced potatoes in a bowl with the water and 25g / 1oz butter. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 12 minutes, until tender, stirring twice. Mash well, then add salt and pepper to taste, 30ml / 2tbls double cream and parsley; beat well.*

Cool *the potato mixture slightly, then put into a forcing bag, fitted with a large star tube, and pipe an attractive border of potato around the edge of a shallow oval serving platter. (This can be prepared in advance, if liked.) Keep on one side while preparing the sole fillets and the sauce.*

Cut *each fillet in half lengthwise to give 8 small fillets. Place the fillets on a board and cover with a half slice of ham. Arrange slices of avocado over the tail end of each fillet, then sprinkle lightly with salt and pepper to taste, finely chopped shallot and 10ml / 2tsp lemon juice.*

Fold *over the uncovered half of each fillet to cover the filling and to form neat parcels. Melt 25g / 1oz butter in a covered shallow dish at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds. Arrange the fish parcels in the melted butter in dish, with the wider portions to the outside of the dish.*

Pour *over 30ml / 2tbls white wine and the remaining lemon juice. Cover the dish with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 70% (Medium-High) for 4 minutes, carefully rearranging the fish parcels once during the cooking time to ensure even cooking.*

Lift *the fish parcels from the dish and arrange them on the potato-edged serving platter. Add the fish liquor from the dish to the chicken stock and make up to 225ml / 8fl oz with water, if necessary. Melt 25g / 1oz butter in a covered bowl or jug for 15-30 seconds at 100% (High).*

Stir *30ml / 2tbls flour into the melted butter and then smoothly blend in the chicken stock mixture. Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 2 minutes, whisking the sauce thoroughly halfway through cooking and at the end of the cooking time, to ensure a smooth sauce mixture.*

Whisk *in 30ml / 2tbls cream and 30ml / 2tbls wine and microwave at 100% (High) for 30 seconds. Spoon the sauce over fish and microwave at 70% (Medium-High) for 4 minutes until heated through. Garnish with lemon twists, a slice of avocado and parsley sprigs.*

RAY DUNS

Microwaving rice

Gone are the days of sticky rice and messy saucepans! Cooking rice in the microwave gives you separate fluffy grains every time, whether cooked from scratch or reheated.

Rice cooked in the microwave may not be much quicker than cooking rice conventionally, but this method means less messy washing up. It is also simple to add tasty pieces of meat, vegetables, nuts and fruit to make a variety of delicious main courses or side dishes.

Try freezing any of your rice dishes, then thawing and reheating them in the microwave as needed or just cook the day before, refrigerate and reheat. They will be a guaranteed success, tasting as though just freshly cooked.

Salad Rice Ring

CHRIS KING

How to microwave rice

Measure *the desired quantity of rice into a casserole, together with a knob of butter or margarine and corresponding amount of salt as directed in the chart below. Do not over-salt, as extra can be added after cooking.*

Stir *in the measured amount of boiling water; cover with cling film rolled back at one edge or a loose-fitting lid. Microwave at 100% (High) as directed below, then reduce power to 50% (Medium).*

Microwave *for the remaining time, stirring a couple of times during cooking. Leave to stand, still covered, for 5 minutes. Always fluff rice with a fork before serving to lift and separate the grains.*

Methods and microwave times for cooking rice

TYPE	BOILING WATER	SALT	METHOD
Long grain white rice			
100g / 4oz	275ml / 10fl oz	2.5ml / ½tsp	Combine the rice, boiling water and salt, together with a knob of butter or margarine, in a large casserole; cover with vented cling film or a loose-fitting lid. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 12 minutes, stirring 2-3 times during the cooking time. Let stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork before serving.
150g / 5oz	350ml / 12fl oz	2.5ml / ½tsp	
175g / 6oz	400ml / 14fl oz	2.5ml / ½tsp	
200g / 7oz	450ml / 16fl oz	5ml / 1tsp	
225g / 8oz	500ml / 18fl oz	5ml / 1tsp	
275g / 10oz	575ml / 22fl oz	5ml / 1tsp	
Long grain brown rice			
100g / 4oz	275ml / 10fl oz	2.5ml / ½tsp	Combine the rice, boiling water and salt, together with a knob of butter or margarine, in a large casserole; cover with vented cling film or a loose-fitting lid. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 25 minutes, stirring 2-3 times during the cooking time. Let stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork before serving.
150g / 5oz	350ml / 12fl oz	2.5ml / ½tsp	
175g / 6oz	400ml / 14fl oz	2.5ml / ½tsp	
200g / 7oz	450ml / 16fl oz	5ml / 1tsp	
225g / 8oz	500ml / 18fl oz	5ml / 1tsp	
275g / 10oz	575ml / 22fl oz	5ml / 1tsp	
Quick cook brown rice			
100g / 4oz	225ml / 8fl oz	2.5ml / ½tsp	Combine the rice, boiling water and salt, together with a knob of butter or margarine, in a large casserole; cover with vented cling film or loose-fitting lid. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 8 minutes, stirring 2-3 times during the cooking time. Leave to stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork before serving.
150g / 5oz	275ml / 10fl oz	2.5ml / ½tsp	
175g / 6oz	350ml / 12fl oz	2.5ml / ½tsp	
200g / 7oz	400ml / 14fl oz	5ml / 1tsp	
225g / 8oz	450ml / 16fl oz	5ml / 1tsp	
275g / 10oz	500ml / 20fl oz	5ml / 1tsp	

Curried rice

15¾ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

1 celery stalk, chopped
knob of butter or margarine
275ml / 10fl oz boiling water
100g / 4oz long grain white rice
1.5ml / ¼tsp curry powder
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
45ml / 3tbls raisins or sultanas

SERVES 2

1 Place the celery and butter in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds, until the celery is tender-crisp.
2 Add the remaining ingredients except the raisins; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes, or until boiling. Stir.
3 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium). Microwave for 12 minutes, or until the rice is tender. Stir in the raisins and cover. Let stand 5 minutes. Fluff up the rice with a fork.

Cheesy rice

15 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

100g / 4oz long grain rice
275ml / 10fl oz boiling water
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
knob of butter or margarine
45ml / 3tbls Cheddar cheese, grated
2.5ml / ½tsp dried parsley
paprika

SERVES 2

1 Cook rice, see chart page 249.
2 Stir in the cheese and parsley. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes.
3 Stir; sprinkle with paprika.

Freezer notes

To freeze one serving of Curried Rice or Cheesy Rice. Place in a freezer/microwave dish, cover, label and freeze for no longer than two weeks. To cook from frozen, microwave at 70% (Medium/High) for 3-5 minutes; stir once. Fluff up.

Savoury rice

15 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

500ml / 18fl oz boiling stock
225g / 8oz long grain white rice
knob of butter or margarine
5ml / 1tsp salt
250g / 8oz packet frozen mixed vegetables

SERVES 4

1 Combine ingredients in a 2.3L / 4pt casserole; cover. Microwave as directed in the chart on page 249, adding the frozen vegetables after 6 minutes. Let stand, covered for 5 minutes. Fluff up.

Freezer notes

Freeze leftover rice in small portions. Place in freezer/microwave dishes, cover, label, and freeze for no longer than one month. To cook the rice from frozen, cover and microwave at 100% (High) as directed in table below, stirring once or twice during cooking.

1 serving	*2-3 minutes*
2 servings	*4-6 minutes*
4 servings	*6-8 minutes*

Seasoned brown rice

28¾ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

2 spring onions, chopped
½ celery stalk, chopped
10ml / 2tsp chopped fresh parsley
knob of butter or margarine
275ml / 10fl oz boiling stock
100g / 4oz brown rice
2.5ml / ½tsp salt

SERVES 2

1 Place the vegetables, parsley and butter in a 2.3L / 4pt casserole; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds, stir.
2 Add the remaining ingredients; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) for 25 minutes; stir 2-3 times. Let stand 5 minutes.

Vegetable rice mix

24 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

Use this mix on its own or as a foundation for Fried Rice Medley or Oriental Rice.

150g / 5oz mushrooms, sliced
2 carrots, finely cubed
½ green pepper, chopped
2 celery stalks, chopped
½ small onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
275g / 10oz white or brown rice, cooked (see chart, page 249)
salt and pepper

SERVES 6-8

1 In a 2.3L / 4pt casserole, combine the vegetables, garlic and butter; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5-7 minutes, or until vegetables are tender; stir once.
2 Stir in the rice, salt and pepper. Microwave, covered, at 100% (High) for 4-6 minutes. Fluff with a fork.

Brown rice

28 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

500ml / 18fl oz boiling water
225g / 8oz brown rice
knob of butter or margarine
5ml / 1tsp salt

SERVES 4

1 Put ingredients in a 2.3L / 4pt casserole, cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.
2 Reduce power to 50% (Medium). Microwave for 25 minutes, stirring twice, until the rice is tender. Let stand for 5 minutes.

Microtips

Cook rice early and reheat before serving. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) as directed below.

1 serving	*1-2 minutes*
2 servings	*2-4 minutes*
4 servings	*4-6 minutes*

Fried rice medley

29 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

½ quantity Vegetable Rice Mix (see recipe opposite)
225g / 8oz cooked chicken, beef or pork, diced
2 eggs, slightly beaten
knob of butter or margarine
15ml / 1tbls soy sauce

SERVES 4-6

1 In a 1.7L / 3pt casserole, combine the Vegetable Rice Mix and meat; cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 4-7 minutes, or until heated, stirring once. Set aside.
3 Place the eggs and butter in small bowl or casserole. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-1¾ minutes, or until the eggs are set, stirring after half the cooking time.
4 Chop up the eggs. Stir into the rice mixture. Add the soy sauce, tossing to coat the rice.

Oriental rice

30 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

1 small eating apple, peeled and chopped
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
½ quantity Vegetable Rice Mix (see recipe opposite)
15ml / 1tbls raisins
5ml / 1tsp curry powder
2.5ml / ½tsp sugar
25g / 1oz cashew nuts or peanuts

SERVES 4

1 Place the apple and butter in a small bowl. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1½-3 minutes, or until the apple is tender.
2 In a 1.1L / 2pt casserole, mix together the Vegetable Rice Mix, apple, raisins, curry powder and sugar; cover.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 4½-7 minutes, or until the rice mixture is heated through, stir after half the time. Mix in the nuts and serve.

Salad rice ring

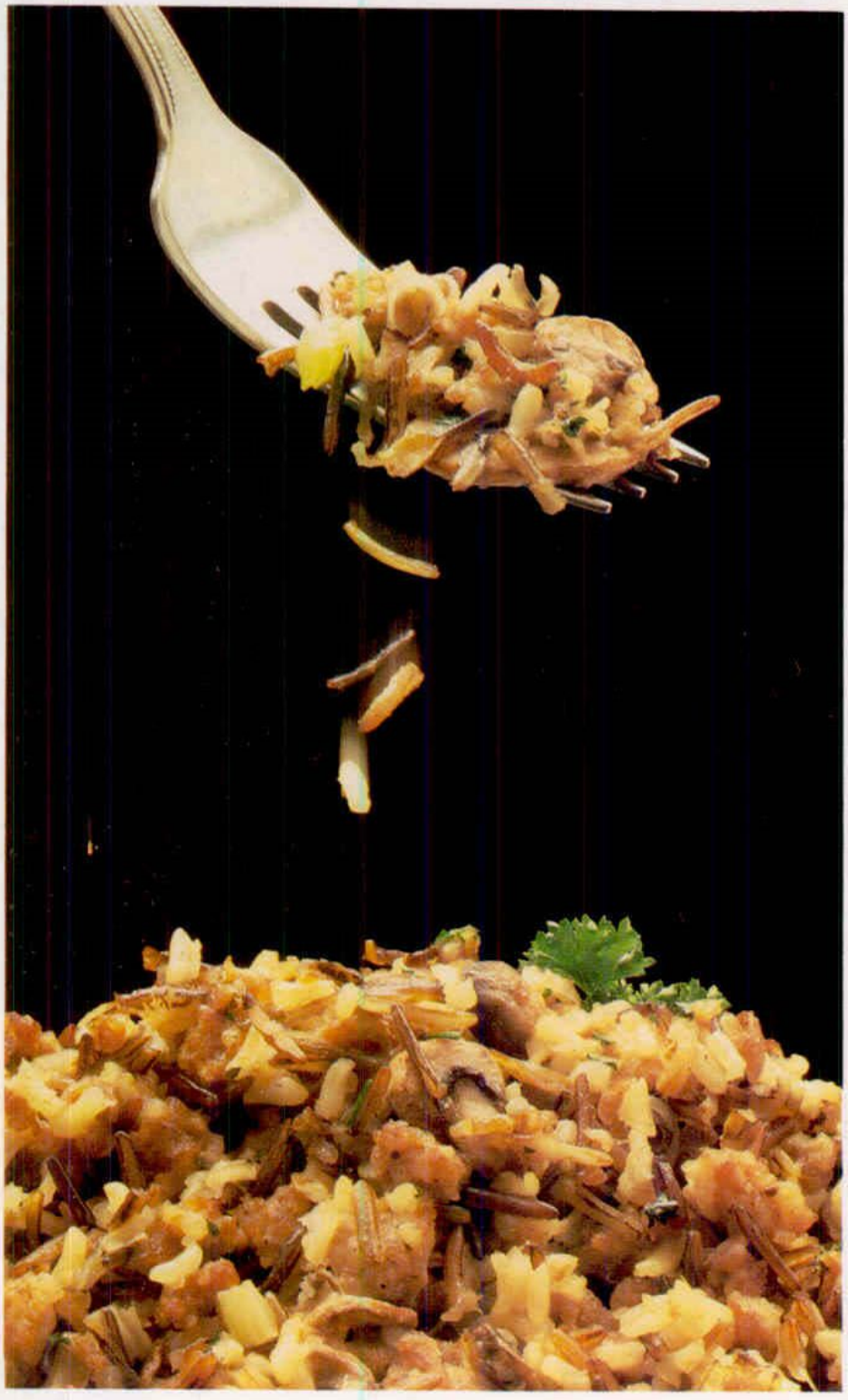
18 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

2 tomatoes, chopped and seeded
1 spring onion, thinly sliced
15ml / 1tbls chopped green pepper
5ml / 1tsp olive oil
30ml / 2tbls chopped fresh parsley
100g / 4 oz long grain white rice, cooked (see chart, page 249)

SERVES 2

1 In a 1.1L / 2pt casserole, combine the vegetables and olive oil. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender.
2 Stir in the parsley. Stir the vegetable mixture into the rice. Spoon the rice mixture into a greased 18cm / 7in non-metallic ring mould. Press down gently.
3 Cover with greaseproof paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, or until heated through. Turn out onto a serving plate.



Wild rice and sausage

39 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

1.4kg / 3lb sausage meat
350g / 12oz mushrooms, sliced
100g / 4oz celery, chopped
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
400g / 14oz long grain and wild rice mix, cooked (see Microtips, below)
295g / 10.4oz can condensed cream of mushroom soup
125ml / 4fl oz hot water
30ml / 2tbls chopped parsley
1 chicken stock cube

SERVES 10-12

1 Crumble the sausage meat into a 2.3L / 4pt casserole. Microwave at 100% (High) for 11-15 minutes until no longer pink, stirring 2-3 times. Drain.
2 In a 3.4L / 6pt casserole, combine the mushrooms, celery and butter; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5-8 minutes, or until celery is tender. Drain.
3 Stir in the sausage meat and remaining ingredients. Microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes. Fluff with a fork.

Microtips

To microwave 400g / 14oz long grain and wild rice mix, use 675ml / 24fl oz water, 5ml / 1tsp salt and a knob of butter or margarine. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 12 minutes. Leave rice to stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Fluff up and adjust seasoning, if necessary.

Batch cooking: minced beef

Make up batches of beef mix to store in your freezer and at a moment's notice you will be able to produce a really satisfying meal if unexpected guests arrive.

With batches of minced beef mix in the freezer you have an invaluable supply of quick meals to hand. A batch of mix takes 8 minutes to thaw in the microwave and can then be transformed into recipes such as Spaghetti Beef Mix or Beef Lasagne in no time at all.

Save time and energy by preparing one large batch of mix on a weekend or free evening. Divide it into separate packages and freeze as directed. This way you will be able to thaw a package as needed and make up a tasty recipe quickly and easily. Satisfying meals in under 30 minutes will be yours for the eating.

Use good lean beef if possible. If using less lean meat, allow the beef mix to cool after cooking, and skim the fat off the top before packaging and freezing. Freeze for no longer than 3 months.

Layered Casserole

DAVE KING

Basic beef mix

27 mins

Standing time: none

2 onions, sliced and separated into rings
3 garlic cloves, crushed
45ml / 3tbls vegetable oil
2.3kg / 5lb lean minced beef
2 beef stock cubes
275ml / ½pt hot water
60ml / 4tbls of chilli sauce or few drops Tabasco
40g / 1½oz packet onion soup
salt and pepper

MAKES 5 CONTAINERS OF MIX

Spaghetti beef mix

25 mins

Standing time: none

1 container Basic Beef Mix, thawed (see below)
400g / 14oz can chopped tomatoes
150g / 5oz tomato purée
2.5ml / ½tsp dried basil
2.5ml / ½tsp grated nutmeg
2.5ml / ½tsp sugar
1 small bay leaf
salt and pepper
450-700g / 1-1½lb spaghetti

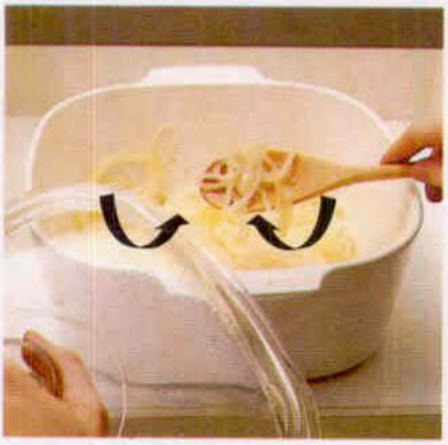
SERVES 4-6

1 Combine all the ingredients except the spaghetti in a 2L / 3½pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
2 Stir and reduce the power to 50% (Medium). Microwave for 20 minutes.
3 Meanwhile, cook the spaghetti conventionally. Drain well. Serve the sauce over the hot spaghetti.

Cook's notes

Extra flavourings can be added to the Beef Mix after thawing. Substitute oregano for the nutmeg and serve with Parmesan cheese for an Italian-style meal.

How to microwave Basic beef mix



Combine *the onions, garlic and oil in a large casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes until the onions are soft. Stir once or twice.*

Crumble *the beef into the onion mixture, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 14-16 minutes, stirring 2 or 3 times.*

Dissolve *the stock cubes in the water and stir in with all the remaining ingredients. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes.*

How to freeze and thaw Basic beef mix

To freeze, *divide the cooked Basic Beef Mix into 5 containers. Cover, label and freeze for up to 3 months.*

To thaw, *place 1 container of the Basic Beef Mix into the dish to be used for the recipe; cover.*

Microwave *at 50% (Medium) for 8-11 minutes, breaking apart once or twice. Let stand 5-10 minutes.*

DAVE KING

Stuffed peppers

15 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

1 container Basic Beef Mix, thawed (see opposite)
225g / 8oz long grain white rice
435g / 15.3oz can tomato soup
2.5ml / ½tsp dried basil
salt and pepper
4 green, red or yellow peppers
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, grated

SERVES 4

Spaghetti Beef Mix

1 Combine the Basic Beef Mix, rice, half the tomato soup, the basil, salt and pepper.
2 Remove the tops, pulp and seeds from the peppers. Fill each with one quarter of the beef mixture. Place in a dish and cover.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 15-20 minutes, rotating once.
4 Top with cheese and pour over the remaining tomato soup during the last 2 minutes of cooking. Scatter with chopped chives and let stand, covered, for 3 minutes.

DAVE KING

Layered casserole

27½ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

1 container Basic Beef Mix, thawed (see opposite)
15ml / 1tbls plain flour
150ml / ¼pt beef stock
275g / 10½oz can vegetable soup, or vegetable and beef soup
275g / 10oz frozen peas
700g / 1½lb potatoes, cooked and mashed
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, grated
1 egg
10ml / 2tsp fresh chopped parsley
pinch of paprika

SERVES 4

1 Place the Basic Beef Mix in a glass casserole, and stir in the flour, combining well.
2 Heat the stock at 100% (High) for 1 minute. Stir into the beef and add the soup. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.
3 Prick the bag of peas and microwave in the bag at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes or until warm. Drain well. Spread the peas over the beef mixture.
4 Microwave the mashed potato at 100% (High) for 3½-5 minutes or until heated, stirring once.
5 Stir the cheese, egg, parsley and paprika into the warm potatoes. Pipe or spread the potato evenly over the peas. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
6 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 12-15 minutes, rotating 1-2 times. Cover and stand 5 minutes.

Stuffed Peppers

Microtips

Using a glass casserole for the Layered Casserole displays the layers, but remember, when using one with a metal frame you must remove the bowl from the frame during the microwaving time. The metal will cause sparking which may pit the walls of the cooker. Return to the frame to serve.

Beef lasagne

21 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

6-8 pieces lasagne, cooked and drained (or pre-cooked type)
1 container Basic Beef Mix, thawed (see page 254)
½ green pepper, seeded and chopped
30ml / 2tbls tomato purée
400g / 14oz can chopped tomatoes
2.5ml / ½tsp dried oregano
1 bay leaf
450g / 1lb Ricotta cheese, or drained cottage cheese
75ml / 5tbls grated Parmesan cheese
100g / 4oz Mozzarella cheese, grated

SERVES 4

1 In a medium mixing bowl, combine the Basic Beef Mix, green pepper, tomato purée, canned tomatoes, oregano and bay leaf. Cover loosely with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 10 minutes, or until the mixture is completely heated through. Remove the bay leaf.

2 To assemble and microwave the Beef lasagne, follow the step-by-step instructions below. Put under a hot grill to brown the top if wished.

How to microwave Beef lasagne

Place *half of the lasagne into the bottom of a 20cm / 8in square dish. Top with half of the beef mixture and spread over two-thirds of the Ricotta.*

Top *with half the Parmesan. Repeat with the remaining lasagne, beef and Ricotta. Sprinkle with the Mozzarella and remaining Parmesan cheese.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, rotating once. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) for 6-9 minutes. Cover and stand for 5 minutes.*

Dessert sauces

Cheer up an everyday pudding with a flavourful finish such as Hot Fudge or Chocolate Sundae Sauce. With the microwave's ability to melt and heat, you can make delicious sauces, all in one bowl.

Hot sweet sauces are easy to make in the microwave; there is no need for continuous stirring and no messy saucepans.

Make sauces just before serving, or make them a day in advance — they will reheat perfectly. Store large batches in the refrigerator and reheat as much as you need.

To reheat about 275ml / ½pt, microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute, then stir thoroughly. Continue to microwave, stirring every 30 seconds, until hot through. Smaller volumes take less time.

Orange sauce

3 mins

Standing time: none

75g / 3oz sugar
30ml / 2tbls cornflour
pinch of salt
250ml / 9fl oz boiling water
25g / 1oz butter
zest of 2 oranges
125ml / 4fl oz orange juice
30ml / 2tbls lemon juice

MAKES ABOUT 425ml / ¾pt

1 Combine the sugar, cornflour and salt in a 1.1L / 2pt bowl. Stir in the water and butter.

2 Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, until thickened and clear, stirring after 2 minutes, then every 1 minute.

3 Grate the orange zest, leaving some to cut in strips to decorate. Add grated zest to the sauce with the orange and lemon juices until evenly mixed.

4 Serve warm with assorted desserts, decorated with zest.

Pancakes served with Orange Sauce

DAVE KING

Butterscotch topping

5½ mins

Standing time: none

225g / 8oz soft brown sugar
15ml / 1tbls plain flour
50ml / 2fl oz milk
30ml / 2tbls golden syrup
50g / 2oz butter, cubed
grated nutmeg (optional)

MAKES ABOUT 425ml / ¾pt

1 In a 1.1L / 2pt bowl combine the sugar and flour. Stir in the milk and syrup, then add the butter.
2 Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 2-4 minutes or until the mixture boils. Stir well.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for a further 3½ minutes. Stir in the nutmeg if using. Serve warm.

Easy caramel sauce

3 mins

Standing time: none

225g / 8oz caramel toffees
50ml / 2fl oz milk

MAKES ABOUT 275ml / ½pt

1 Place the ingredients in an 850ml / 1½pt bowl. Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes or until melted, stirring after each minute.
2 Serve the sauce warm or cold with ice cream, baked bananas, sponge puddings or pancakes.

Hot fudge topping

5 mins

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz sugar
100g / 4oz soft brown sugar
30ml / 2tbls cocoa powder
15ml / 1tbls plain flour
pinch of salt
150ml / ¼pt milk
15ml / 1tbls golden syrup
15g / ½oz butter or margarine, cubed
few drops vanilla flavouring

MAKES ABOUT 425ml / ¾pt

1 In a 1.1L / 2pt bowl combine the sugars, cocoa, flour and salt. Stir in the milk and the syrup. Add the cubed butter.
2 Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 2-4 minutes or until the mixture boils. Stir well.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for a further 3-5 minutes, or until the sauce is of the desired thickness and a rich chocolate colour, stirring every 1½ minutes. Stir in the vanilla flavouring.

VARIATION
Nut fudge topping: Finely chop 50g / 2oz nuts (walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds or pecans), and stir into the sauce immediately before serving hot over ice cream.

Praline sauce

3½ mins

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz soft brown sugar
100g / 4oz butter, cubed
30ml / 2tbls water

MAKES ABOUT 200ml / 7fl oz

1 Place ingredients in an 850ml / 1½pt bowl. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes or until butter is almost melted. Stir with a wooden spoon or beat briskly using a balloon whisk until smooth.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for a further 1½-/2½ minutes. Boil for 1 minute and serve warm.

VARIATIONS
Decrease the water to 15ml / 1tbls. Microwave at 100% (High) until the mixture has boiled for 2 minutes. Pour or spoon over cold desserts such as ice cream.

Chocolate sundae sauce

2½ mins

Standing time: none

Serve the sauce warm on its own or as a dip with chunks of apple, banana, pear, pineapple or sponge cake, as for a fondue.

100g / 4oz plain chocolate drops
50g / 2oz white marshmallows, chopped
50ml / 2fl oz milk

MAKES ABOUT 275ml / ½pt

1 Place all the ingredients in a 1.1L / 2pt bowl.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 2½-4½ minutes or until the mixtures comes to a full boil and is thick and smooth, stirring every minute.
3 If the sauce is too thick, stir in more milk, until the sauce is the right consistency.

Strawberry sauce

3 mins

Standing time: none

This is a delicious sauce to make from soft fruit in your freezer.

10ml / 2tsp cornflour
30ml / 2tbls caster sugar
275g / 10oz frozen strawberries, thawed with juice reserved
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice

MAKES ABOUT 375ml / 13fl oz

1 In an 850ml / 1½pt bowl combine the cornflour, sugar and strawberry juice and stir in the strawberries until well mixed.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-5 minutes or until clear and thickened, stirring every minute.
3 Stir in the lemon juice. Serve warm or cold.

VARIATION
Other frozen fruit may be substituted and a few spoonfuls of liqueur added: try Cointreau with strawberries; framboise with raspberries or kirsch with blackberries. Add the liqueur in step 3, immediately before serving.

Lemon butter sauce

4 mins

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz butter, softened
175g / 6oz sugar
15ml / 1tbls cornflour
grated zest of 2 lemons
100ml / 3½fl oz lemon juice
100ml / 3½fl oz water
2 eggs, lightly beaten

MAKES ABOUT 500ml / 18fl oz

1 Cream the butter, sugar and cornflour together. Blend in the remaining ingredients until smooth and thick.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes, or until clear and thickened, stirring after 2 minutes, then every minute.
3 If necessary, make the sauce in advance, then reheat it as it is required.
4 Serve warm on gingerbreads, sponge desserts, or ice cream.

From left to right: *Butterscotch Topping; Easy Caramel Sauce; Hot Fudge Topping; Praline Sauce; Chocolate Sundae Sauce; Strawberry Sauce.*

Hot sauce with fresh fruit

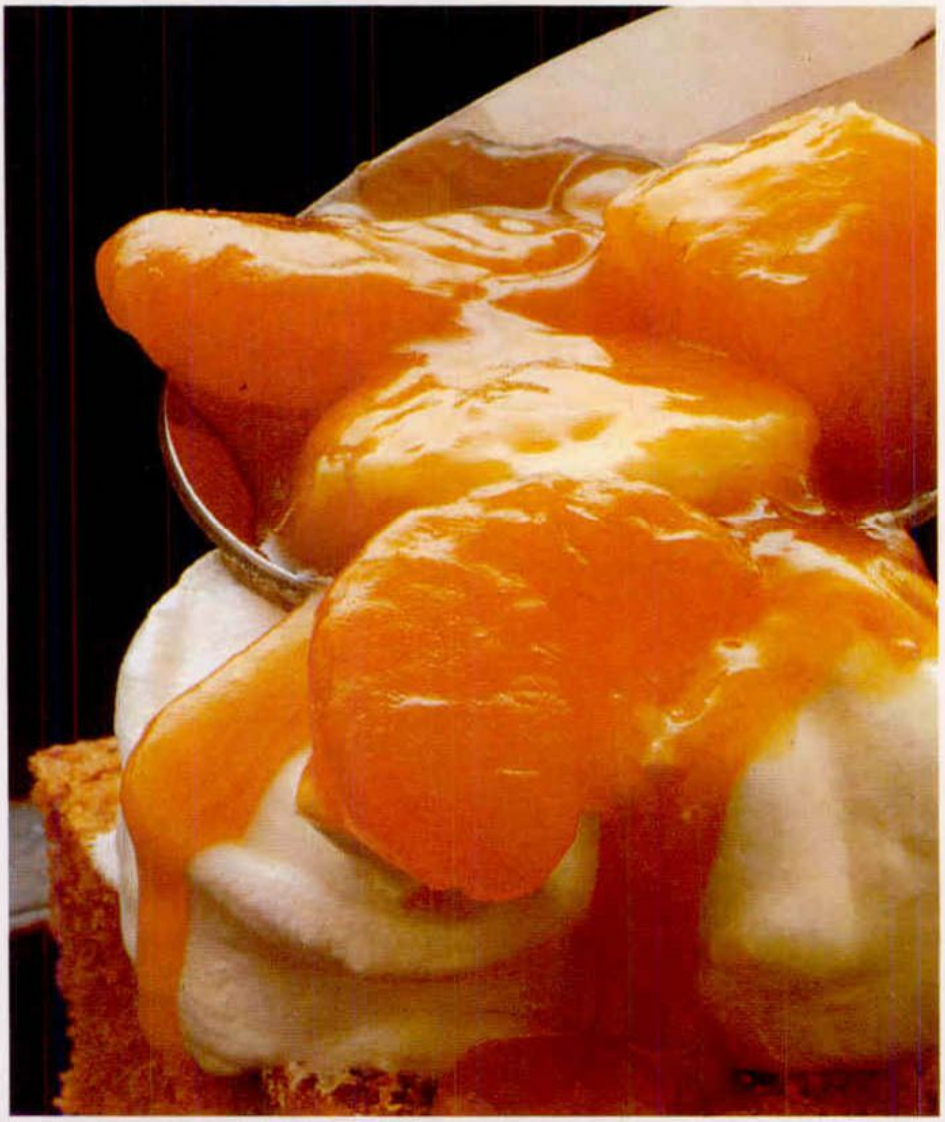
4 mins

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz light soft brown sugar
15ml / 1tbls cornflour
250ml / 9fl oz orange juice
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
grated zest of 2 large oranges
30ml / 2tbls lemon juice
275g / 10oz can mandarin oranges, drained, or 275g / 10oz grapes, halved and pips removed
100g / 4oz fresh or canned pineapple chunks
2 bananas, sliced

SERVES 6-8

1 In a 1.4L / 2½pt mixing bowl, mix the sugar and cornflour. Add the orange juice and butter or margarine.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes, or until the sauce is clear and slightly thickened, stirring after half the time. Stir in the grated zest and lemon juice.
3 Stir in the prepared fruit. The sauce can be prepared in advance, and then be reheated before adding the fruit.



Right: *Hot Sauce with Fresh Fruit*

Soured cream sauce

1½ mins

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz light soft brown sugar
150ml / ¼pt soured cream

MAKES ABOUT 250ml / 9fl oz

1 Mix the sugar with the cream in a 575ml / 1pt bowl.
2 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 1½-2 minutes, or until warmed through and the sugar has melted. Stir well after 1 minute to ensure that the sugar dissolves evenly and completely. Do not allow to boil or the cream may separate due to the heat of the sugar.
3 Serve the sauce warm over hot or cold puddings, steamed desserts or on ice cream or fruit.

Left: *Soured Cream Sauce*

Speedy sandwich snacks

With the help of your microwave cooker, a range of delicious sandwich snacks can be ready in just a few minutes, with the minimum of fuss.

Be creative with the sandwich bases as well as the filling or toppings and make the most of the selection of interesting breads now available: white or wholemeal Greek pittas, for example, make ideal 'containers' for juicy fillings.

Remember that overheating in the microwave toughens and dries bread, so timings really are critical. Slices of toast or day-old bread make perfect bases since they do not become soggy as easily as fresh bread and rolls, (day-old bread freshens during heating).

Courgette pittas

2¾ mins

Standing time: none

1 courgette, cut in strips
50g / 2oz mushrooms, sliced
4 tomatoes, chopped
2.5ml / ½tsp dried basil
1.5ml / ¼tsp garlic powder
30ml / 2tbls grated Parmesan cheese
4 pittas

SERVES 4

1 Combine the courgette and mushrooms in a bowl. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-2½ minutes until tender. Drain off liquid.

2 Stir in the tomatoes, basil, garlic and cheese. Split open one side of pittas and spoon in filling, dividing it between the four.

3 Place the filled pittas on a plate lined with 2 layers of absorbent paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds until hot. Garnish with watercress.

Courgette Pittas

RAY DUNS

Baked Cheese Sandwiches, Salad Specials, Cheesy Prawn Sandwiches

Baked cheese sandwiches

7 mins

Standing time: none

8 slices white bread
4 slices processed Cheddar cheese
2 eggs, lightly beaten
250ml / 9fl oz milk
15ml / 1tbls dried minced onion
5ml / 1tsp made English mustard
5ml / 1tsp dried parsley
1.5ml / ¼tsp paprika

SERVES 4

1 Arrange 4 slices bread in a 20cm / 8in square baking dish. Top each with a slice of cheese and cover with the remaining bread.
2 Blend together the remaining ingredients, pour over sandwiches; let soak until liquid is absorbed.
3 Microwave, uncovered, at 50% (Medium) for 7-8 minutes until sandwiches are set. Garnish with tomato and watercress; serve hot.

Salad specials

2 mins

Standing time: none

15ml / 1tbls mayonnaise
2.5ml / ½tsp made English mustard
2 slices bread, toasted
2 thin slices red onion
2 thin slices tomato
25g / 1oz alfalfa (or bean) sprouts
1 slice processed Cheddar cheese, cut into 8 strips

SERVES 2

1 In a bowl, combine the mayonnaise with mustard and spread over toast. Top each with a slice of onion and tomato. Cover with the alfalfa or bean sprouts and arrange cheese strips on top.
2 Place on a plate lined with 2 layers of absorbent paper. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 2-2½ minutes or until the cheese melts, turning once during cooking. Serve at once.

Cheesy prawn sandwiches

¾ min

Standing time: none

Vary if liked by substituting flaked crab or tuna for prawns.

25g / 1oz Emmental cheese, grated
1 small onion, chopped
30ml / 2tbls chopped celery
100g / 4oz peeled prawns
salt and pepper
16 thin slices cucumber
4 slices buttered toast

SERVES 4

1 Place the cheese, onion and celery in a small bowl. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 45-60 seconds until the cheese softens. Add the prawns and seasoning.
2 Place cucumber on slices of toast and top with the prawn mixture.

Mexican pizza sandwich

4 mins

Standing time: none

2 tomatoes, chopped
1 onion, chopped
15ml / 1tbls green chillies, seeded and chopped
1.5ml / ¼tsp garlic powder
2.5ml / ½tsp dried mixed herbs
salt and pepper
2 slices buttered toast
50g / 2oz Mozzarella cheese, grated

SERVES 2

1 In an 850ml / 1½pt casserole, combine the tomatoes, onion and chillies. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until the onions are tender, stirring once. Drain, then add the seasonings.
2 Arrange toast on a serving plate lined with 2 layers of absorbent paper. Cover with the tomato mixture and top with the cheese.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes until cheese melts, turning once.

Taco hot dogs

6 mins

Standing time: none

These make a filling and substantial snack — perfect for a teenage party treat.

8 hot dogs or frankfurters
8 hot dog rolls
205g / 7¼oz can beef taco filling
100g / 4oz Cheddar cheese, grated
25g / 1oz crushed corn or tortilla chips
shredded lettuce and chopped tomatoes, to garnish (optional)

SERVES 4-8

1 Place 4 hot dogs or frankfurters in 4 rolls. Arrange cut side uppermost in a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in baking dish, lined with 2 layers of absorbent paper. Spoon one half of the taco filling over hot dogs or frankfurters. Sprinkle with half the cheese and crushed chips.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and rolls are hot to the touch, rotating after half the time.
3 Sprinkle with shredded lettuce and chopped tomatoes, if desired. Repeat with remaining hot dogs or frankfurters.

VARIATIONS

Chilli cheese dogs: Top hot dogs with 425g / 15oz can drained chilli beans and 4 slices processed Cheddar cheese, halved. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.

German-style dogs: Top hot dogs or frankfurters with a mixture of 175g / 6oz drained sauerkraut and 50g / 2oz sweet pickle. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes, covered with greaseproof paper.

Bacon and cheese dogs: Mix 100g / 4oz cheese spread with 30ml / 2tbls cooked chopped bacon. Divide between hot dogs or frankfurters and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes.

Above: *Mexican Pizza Sandwich*
Right: *Taco Hot Dogs*

Picnic party for 8

Picnic in style with a well-planned menu from your microwave. You can spread a portable feast before your guests and have all the work done effortlessly in the two preceding days.

There's something so attractive about a colourful cold spread in the open air — it is guaranteed to promote healthy appetites and, provided you chill and pack your food well, the picnic will live up to its mouth-watering appearance.

When planning, check that you have suitable boxes or bowls with lids in which to refrigerate and transport the food. You will need a ring mould, two 575ml / 1pt sealable pots for the dips, a large sealed box for the chicken, a lidded bowl for the potato salad and a 23cm / 9in pie dish for the dessert. If you do not have an insulated cold box or bag, wrap the containers of food straight from the refrigerator in several layers of newspaper. The more closely they are packed, the colder they will be when you come to eat them.

You may find it preferable to pack light, disposable cutlery and paper plates, and carry plenty of thick, absorbent paper napkins, in order to avoid a lot of washing up. It is all too easy to break glasses, no matter how well packed, so whatever you choose to accompany your meal, be it beer, wine or soft drinks, plastic glasses or tumblers will prove invaluable.

Add the finishing touches to your picnic with a choice of biscuits or crisps to eat with the dips; salt, pepper and mustard, crusty French bread and butter — and, of course, a bottle opener!

MENU

Raw Vegetables
A choice of crisp dipping vegetables
Smoked Ham Dip
Creamy dip for vegetables or biscuits
Courgette Dip
Crunchy textured creamy dip
Cold Fried Chicken
Chicken pieces in a crunchy coating
Devilled Eggs
Hard-boiled eggs with a light filling
Creamy Potato Salad
Potato with a rich dressing
Tomato Ring
Tangy vegetables in a tomato mould
Raspberry Cherry Pie
A light biscuit case with fruit filling

Countdown

2 days ahead
Prepare the Tomato Ring, and refrigerate in the mould in which it will be transported.

The day before
Prepare the potatoes, toss them in the Italian dressing and leave to stand overnight. Cook the chicken, cool, the pack into a covered container and refrigerate.

Make the Smoked Ham Dip and pack it into a lidded container; leave in the refrigerator overnight. Microwave the Raspberry Cherry Pie and refrigerate in the pie dish.

Prepare a selection of raw vegetables to eat with the dips. Refrigerate in a bowl of cold water. Hard boil the eggs and refrigerate.

Early on the day
Microwave the potato salad and refrigerate. Prepare Courgette Dip, pack in a lidded container and refrigerate. Shell the hard-boiled eggs and pipe in the stuffing. Pack in a covered dish.

Just before leaving
Drain and pack the raw vegetables. Drain the potatoes and toss in the dressing, then pack in a lidded bowl. Wrap the Tomato Ring, in the mould in cling film. Pack into a picnic basket or cold box or bag.

Arrange *half of the chicken, bone side down on a dish, with the thinner, bone ends pointing inwards, fleshy parts towards the edge.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 12 minutes, then rearrange. Continue to microwave for a further 10-12 minutes, until the juices are clear, not pink.*

Smoked ham dip

1 min

Standing time: none

3 spring onions, chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
15g / ½oz butter
225g / 8oz cream cheese
75ml / 3fl oz soured cream
65ml / 2½fl oz thin cream or milk
65g / 2½oz smoked ham, chopped
30ml / 2tbls chopped parsley
15ml / 1tbls horseradish sauce
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice

SERVES 8

1 In an 850ml / 1½pt bowl, combine the onion, garlic and butter. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 10-20 seconds, or until the butter has melted.
2 Add the cream cheese and microwave at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds until the cream cheese has softened.
3 Mix in all the remaining ingredients. Chill for at least 2 hours, or overnight. (Store in an airtight pot).

Courgette dip

2 mins

Standing time: none

2 courgettes, grated
1 small onion, finely chopped
¼ green pepper, seeded and chopped
15g / ½oz butter
45ml / 3tbls mayonnaise
150ml / ¼pt soured cream
5ml / 1tsp Worcestershire sauce
pinch of cayenne pepper

SERVES 8

1 Place the grated courgette in between two layers of absorbent paper and press to remove excess moisture.
2 In an 850ml / 1½pt bowl, combine the onion, green pepper and butter. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, or until the onion is tender.
3 Stir in the courgettes and all the remaining ingredients. Chill in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours before serving.

DON LAST

Tomato ring

15 mins

Standing time: none

1.4L / 2½pt tomato juice
6 celery stalks, thinly sliced
1 onion, chopped
75g / 3oz light soft brown sugar
45ml / 3tbls lemon juice
salt
4 cloves
2 bay leaves
3 sachets powdered gelatine
1 green pepper, seeded and chopped
100g / 4oz carrot, grated

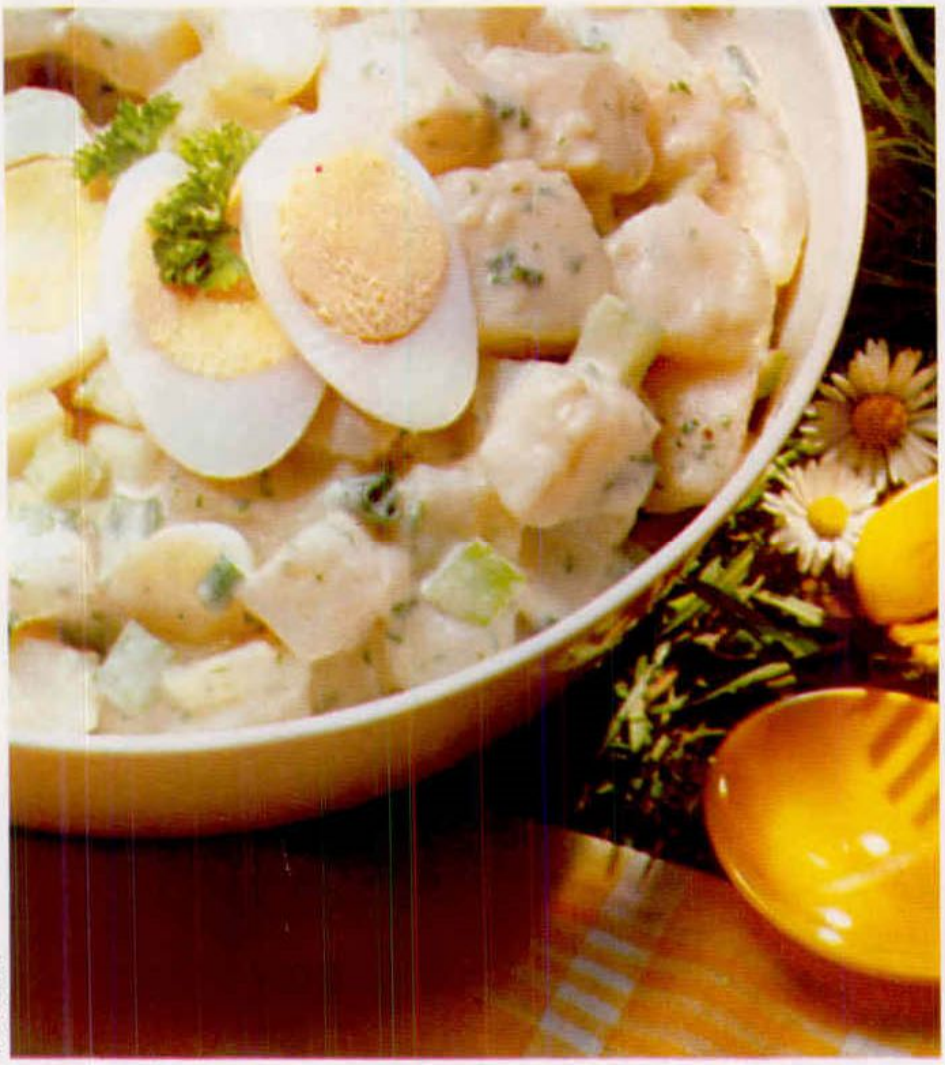
SERVES 8

1 Measure 425ml / ¾pt of the tomato juice into a jug, and set aside. In a 1.4L / 2½pt casserole, mix the remaining tomato juice, one-third of the celery, the onion, brown sugar, lemon juice, salt, cloves and bay leaves, then cover with cling film, rolled back.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 10 minutes, until flavours blend.
3 Stir the gelatine into the reserved tomato juice. Strain the hot tomato juice and stir in the gelatine mixture. Chill until thickened, but not set.
4 Mix in the remaining celery, the green pepper, and carrot. Pour into a 1.7L / 3pt ring mould and chill until firm (about 4 hours). Turn out to serve and fill with watercress if liked.

Tomato Ring

Cook's notes

To give a stronger flavour to the tomato ring, add a little Worcestershire sauce and a few drops of Tabasco sauce.



DON LAST

Creamy Potato Salad

Devilled eggs

25 secs

Standing time: none

Although it is not possible to hard-boil eggs in a microwave, it is handy for softening the butter for the filling.

8 eggs
50g / 2oz butter
15ml / 1tbls mayonnaise
2.5ml / ½tsp mustard powder
1.5ml / ¼tsp paprika
1.5ml / ¼tsp turmeric
salt and pepper
paprika, to garnish

SERVES 8

1 Lower the eggs into boiling water and boil for 10 minutes. Drain and plunge the eggs into cold water until cooled.
2 Shell the eggs and slice in half lengthwise.
3 Scoop out the egg yolks and, in a small bowl, mash them with a fork.
4 Place the butter in a small bowl, cover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 25 seconds.
5 Stir the butter into the egg yolks and cream with a wooden spoon. Beat in all the other ingredients until smooth.
6 Fit a piping bag with a large star nozzle. Spoon in the filling and pipe into the egg halves.
7 Lightly sprinkle the eggs with paprika.

Cook's notes

As the piped egg filling can easily be damaged in transit, you may find it better to spoon it into the eggs instead, shape with a fork, then sprinkle well with parsley.

Creamy potato salad

22 mins

Standing time: none

1.4kg / 3lb potatoes, quartered
salt
60ml / 4tbls water
30ml / 2tbls Italian salad dressing
15ml / 1tbls sugar
125ml / 4fl oz white wine vinegar
2.5ml / ½tsp mustard powder
large pinch of white pepper
3 eggs, lightly beaten
15g / ½oz butter
75ml / 5tbls whipping cream
1 celery stalk, chopped
3 spring onions, chopped
30ml / 2tbls chopped parsley
1 hard boiled egg, sliced (optional)

SERVES 8

1 Dissolve a pinch of salt in the water in a 2.5L / 4½pt casserole. Add the potatoes and cover.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 18-20 minutes, or until tender enough to spear with a fork, stirring after half the time. Drain the cooked potatoes and cut them into cubes.
3 Pour over the Italian dressing and toss the potatoes until coated.
4 In an 850ml / 1½pt casserole, mix the sugar, vinegar, a pinch of salt, mustard and pepper. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes or until the dressing is boiling, stirring it thoroughly after half the time.
5 Stir a little of the hot mixture into the beaten eggs. Gradually mix this back into the hot dressing, stirring continuously to stop the egg cooking too fast.
6 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 2-3 minutes, or until thickened, stirring with a wire whisk every 30 seconds. Stir in the butter until melted, then set aside until quite cool.
7 Mix the cream into the dressing. Add the celery, onion and parsley to the potatoes, then pour the dressing over, tossing to coat the vegetables.
8 Garnish with the sliced egg if using. Chill.

Raspberry Cherry Pie

Cold fried chicken

44¾ mins

Standing time: none

4 × 65g / 2½oz sachets crumb coating mix for chicken
100g / 4oz cornflakes, crushed
45ml / 3tbls chopped parsley
salt
75g / 3oz butter or margarine
2 eggs
45ml / 3tbls milk
12-16 chicken pieces (about 2.7kg / 6lb in weight)

SERVES 8

1 In a shallow dish, mix the crumb coating, cornflake crumbs, parsley and salt. Set aside.
2 Put the butter in a pie dish, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds, or until melted. Beat in the eggs and milk.
3 Dip the chicken pieces in the egg mixture, then roll in the crumb mixture, pressing firmly to coat all over.
4 Place half of the chicken pieces, bone side down, on a large plate or baking dish lined with a double thickness of absorbent paper so that the meatiest parts face outwards.
5 Microwave at 100% (High) for 12 minutes. Re-arrange the chicken so the less cooked parts face out, but do not turn over.
6 Microwave at 100% (High) for 10-12 minutes, or until the juices run clear and the chicken near the bone is no longer pink.
7 Repeat this procedure with the remaining chicken. Allow to cool, then wrap, pack and refrigerate until needed.

Raspberry cherry pie

11 mins

Standing time: none

275g / 10oz frozen raspberries
2 × 390g / 13½oz cans cherry pie filling
45ml / 3tbls cornflour

DIGESTIVE CRUMB CRUST
75g / 3oz butter or margarine
10 digestive or wheatmeal biscuits, crushed

SERVES 8

1 First prepare the biscuit crumb case. Melt the butter in a 23cm / 9in pie plate at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds.
2 Stir in the biscuit crumbs, then press this biscuit mixture firmly around the base and sides of the dish. Stand the dish on an upturned plate and microwave at 100% (High) for 30 seconds. Rotate the dish ½ turn and microwave for a further 45 seconds. Leave to cool.
3 In a large bowl, mix raspberries, pie filling and cornflour.
4 Microwave at 100% (High) for 9-10 minutes, or until clear and thick. Stir every 3 minutes.
5 Pour into the crumb case and decorate with whipped cream if wished. Chill until needed.

Making food look good

A sprinkling of herbs or spices on savoury dishes, or a dusting of icing sugar on sponge cakes are just two easy ways to add colour and interest to microwaved food.

The appearance of food after it has been cooked in the microwave can sometimes be rather pale and lacking in colour — but there are many quick and easy ways in which you can add surface colour and texture to food before or after cooking.

The short cooking time — and the fact that microwaves do not evaporate moisture to the same extent as a conventional cooker — both mean that microwaved food does not acquire a crisp, golden surface. There are, however, microwaving techniques for making sure that your food looks as good as it tastes.

Browned breadcrumb and cheese topping

RAY DUNS

Savoury toppings

For savoury food which is usually browned, try one of these topping ideas.

Packet potato crisps or chips can both be used for a golden topping: sprinkle on after cooking as they go soggy when microwaved.

Breadcrumbs can be browned in the microwave and used as a topping for casseroles, pasta and sauces. Microwave 50g / 2oz brown breadcrumbs with 25g / 1oz butter on 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes. Stir 3 times. Use browned breadcrumbs with grated cheese and pop the food back in the microwave to melt the cheese.

Alternatively, just pop microwaved food under the grill or into a conventional oven to brown and crisp the top.

Using bastes and dry seasonings

These special microwave bastes have been designed so that they add colour as well as flavour to meat and poultry cooked in the microwave. Brush onto food before and during microwaving.

The dry seasoning mixture, made with a combination of dried herbs, spices and flavourings, will also add texture. Store the mixture in an airtight container. Sprinkle the seasoning over meat and poultry and rub in lightly before microwaving.

Savoury baste

30 secs

Standing time: none

25g / 1oz butter or margarine
5ml / 1tsp dried parsley
1.5ml / ¼tsp paprika
pinch of dried mixed herbs
salt and pepper

1 Melt the butter in a covered bowl at 100% (High) for 30-45 seconds. Stir in remaining ingredients.

VARIATION

For a Soy-honey baste, stir 15ml / 1tbls honey into the melted butter until dissolved, then blend in 30ml / 2tbls soy sauce and 1.5ml / ¼tsp mustard powder.

Herb mix

30ml / 2tbls dry beef soup mix
5ml / 1tsp dried mixed herbs
5ml / 1tsp dried parsley
1.5ml / ¼tsp onion salt
1.5ml / ¼tsp pepper

1 Mix all the ingredients together and store in an airtight container.

VARIATION

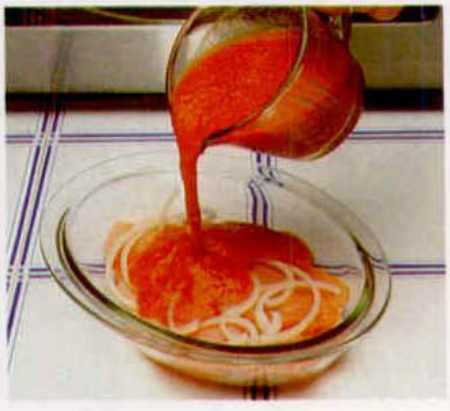
You can use any combination of dried herbs and spices as a seasoning mix. Experiment with your favourites until you find the best combination.

How to make savoury food look good

RAY DUNS

Sprinkle *on fresh herbs such as parsley or chives to add colour and interest. A twist of lemon or cucumber looks fresh and appetizing.*

Dry *soup or stuffing mix can be used to coat meat before microwaving, for colour and texture. A variety of seasoned coating mixes can be used.*



Colourful *sauces will enhance pale food. Marinades, available as dry mixes, will add flavour and colour and can be made into sauces for serving.*

Attractive desserts

Because microwaving is a moist form of cooking, many baked desserts and cakes do not have an opportunity to develop their characteristic crisp, golden surfaces. Plain sponge cakes, for instance, may look a little bland so disguise this with icing or a sprinkling of sugar. Add colour to cakes, using dark ingredients like treacle, dark sugar or chocolate. Sweet sauces, whipped, thick cream and chopped nuts can all be used to make desserts look attractive.

Pastry secrets

Decorate *sweet pies with pastry cut-outs (see right). Sprinkle the shapes with a little ground cinnamon or sugar before microwaving.*

Add *15ml / 1tbls sugar and 30ml / 2tbls cocoa to 100g / 4oz flour to make a chocolate crust for sweet pies or use wholewheat flour for a darker pastry.*

Making cakes and desserts look good

Toast *40g / 1½oz blanched almonds in a small bowl 2½-3 minutes at 100% (High), stirring. Stand for 5 minutes. Use with cakes and desserts.*

Chopped, blanched or toasted nuts *make an attractive topping for plain iced sponge cakes which do not form a crust during microwaving.*

Toast *100g / 4oz desiccated coconut for 2-3 minutes in a roasting bag at 100% (High). Shake bag every 20 seconds. For a smaller amount, reduce the time.*

Onions

Onions are one of the most useful vegetables. They enhance meats and sauces and are also excellent when served on their own. Cooking them in the microwave extracts their full flavour.

There are many different varieties of onions, varying in size, colour and flavour. Large, mild-flavoured Spanish onions are particularly good for stuffing (see page 274). Pickling onions — also known as button or pearl onions — are ordinary onions picked while the bulbs are immature. They are often eaten whole (see Glazed Onions, page 276). Shallots are similar in size but have a more delicate flavour than pickling onions.

Store onions in a cool place. When onions are dried they develop papery skins which protect them during storage.

ALAN DUNS

French onion soup

17¾ mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb onions
50g / 2oz butter
2 × 295g / 10.4oz cans condensed beef consommé
575ml / 1pt cold water
5ml / 1tsp sugar
15ml / 1tbls red wine
pepper
25g / 1oz butter or margarine,
6 slices French bread
30ml / 2tbls grated Parmesan cheese
175g / 6oz Gruyère cheese, grated

SERVES 6

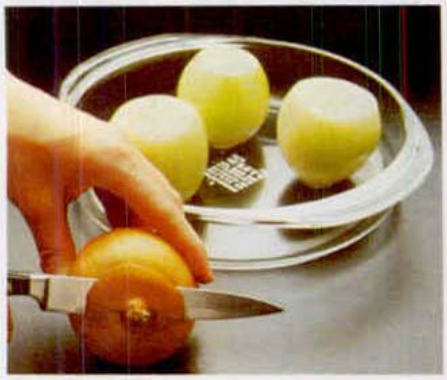
1 Peel the onions. Cut in half lengthwise and slice. Set aside.
2 Place the butter in a 3.4L / 6pt casserole, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds. Add the onion and toss to coat.
3 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 7-10 minutes, or until the onion is tender, stirring 2-3 times. Blend in the consommé, water, sugar, wine and pepper; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 6-8 minutes, or until heated.
4 Brush one side of each slice of French bread with melted butter. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Place under the grill to toast. Ladle the soup into 6 individual serving dishes. Top each bowl with a piece of the toasted French bread and 25g / 1oz grated Gruyère cheese.
5 Arrange 3 bowls in a circle and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-4 minutes or until soup is hot. Repeat with remaining bowls.

How to select onions

Choose *firm, dry onions with papery skins free from blemishes. Check the necks to avoid fresh sprouts. Buy spring onions with 5-7.5cm / 2-3in white stems and crisp green tops.*

Dry *onions keep well up to a month in a cool, dry place. Do not refrigerate or store with potatoes, as onions will absorb moisture and decay more quickly. After cutting, they can be refrigerated for several days. Pack in a sealed container to prevent their distinctive smell affecting other food. Place spring onions in plastic bags and store in the bottom of the refrigerator for up to 1-2 weeks.*

How to microwave whole onions



Slice *the tops from 450g / 1lb medium onions to expose all the layers. Remove root ends and peel. Place the onions in a baking dish and cover.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 5-6 minutes. Rearrange the onions and rotate the dish ½ turn after this time. Then, re-cover and microwave for a further 5-6, or until the onions are tender-crisp. Leave to stand, covered, for 1-2 minutes to complete cooking.*

How to microwave wedges and slices

Peel *450g / 1lb onions. Cut each onion into 8 even-sized wedges or 1cm / ½in slices. Place in a casserole with 25g / 1oz butter, margarine or oil, or 30ml / 2tbls water.*

Cover *with cling film rolled back at one edge or a loose-fitting lid and microwave at 100% (High) for 7-10 minutes, stirring after half the cooking time. When the onions are tender-crisp, slightly translucent and have lost their raw taste, leave to stand, covered, for 5 minutes to complete the cooking. Drain off the water, if using, before serving on hamburgers or steaks.*

Stuffed onions

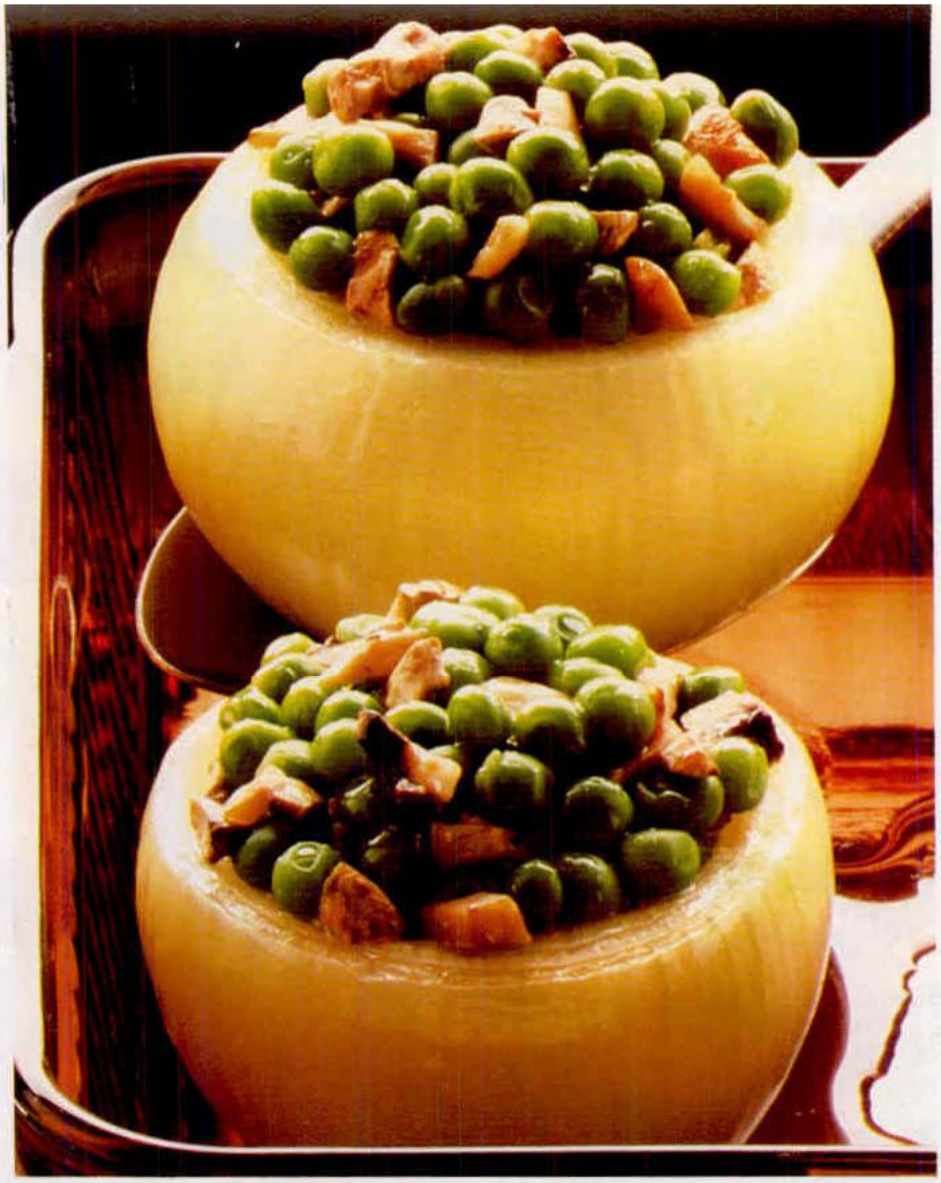
7 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

4 large onions
225g / 8oz frozen peas
100g / 4oz fresh mushrooms, chopped
1.5ml / ¼tsp thyme
salt and pepper
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
45ml / 3tbls hot water or chicken stock

SERVES 4

1 Hollow out the centre of each onion, leaving a 6mm / ¼in thick shell.
2 Combine the peas, mushrooms, thyme and seasoning. Place the onion shells in a 20cm / 8in square baking dish and fill each with quarter of the pea stuffing. Dot each with one-quarter of the butter.
3 Pour the water or stock over the onions. Cover the dish with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 7-10 minutes, or until tender. Rotate the onions once during cooking, and baste with the cooking liquid. Let stand, covered, 3 minutes.



Onion rings in garlic butter

7¾ mins

Standing time: 3-5 mins

65g / 2½oz butter or margarine
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1.5ml / ¼tsp sugar
large pinch of pepper
2 large onions, thinly sliced and separated into rings

SERVES 4-6

1 Put the butter in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds, or until melted. Stir in the garlic, sugar and pepper.
2 Add the onion slices and toss to coat. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 7 minutes, stirring once.
3 Leave to stand, covered for 3-5 minutes. Serve the onion rings as an accompaniment to steaks or hamburgers.

Onions with cheese

10¼ mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb onions, thinly sliced and separated into rings
30ml / 2tbls water
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
5ml / 1tsp parsley
salt and pepper
1.5ml / ¼tsp mustard powder
225ml / 8fl oz milk
75g / 3oz Cheddar cheese, grated

SERVES 4

1 In a 1.7L / 3pt casserole, combine the onions and water. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5-7½ minutes, or until tender, stirring once. Set aside.
2 Place the butter in a 1L / 1¾pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds, or until melted. Stir in the flour and seasonings. Blend in the milk. Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 2½-3½ minutes, or until thickened; stir every minute.
3 Drain the onions, stir into the white sauce. Sprinkle the cheese evenly over the top. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 2-4 minutes or until the cheese melts, rotating the dish once.

Cook's notes

To enrich the sauce, beat 1 egg in a bowl and slowly stir in the hot, cheesy sauce and onions. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute, stirring twice; do not allow to boil. Alternatively, stir 45ml / 3tbls double or soured cream into the hot sauce. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute; stir well to incorporate fully. Watch carefully to ensure that you do not allow sauce to boil or it will curdle.

Creamed onions

8 mins

Standing time: none

For this recipe, use 16 whole small onions, or 4 medium onions, quartered.

450g / 1lb onions
30ml / 2tbls water
150ml / 5fl oz soured cream
45ml / 3tbls milk
salt and pepper
pinch of nutmeg

SERVES 4

1 In a 1.1L / 2pt casserole, combine the onions and water. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 7-8 minutes, stirring once. Drain.
2 Combine the remaining ingredients and pour over the onions; toss to coat.
3 Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave, uncovered, for 1-1½ minutes to heat through.

RAY DUNN

Braised onions with tomatoes

8 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

2 large onions, sliced and separated into rings
125ml / 4fl oz hot water
1 beef stock cube
30ml / 2tbls white wine
1.5ml / ¼tsp mustard powder
salt and pepper
large pinch of garlic powder or ½ garlic clove, crushed
4 small tomatoes, sliced

SERVES 4

1 Combine the hot water, beef stock cube, wine, mustard, salt and pepper and garlic.
2 Place the onion rings in a 2.3L / 4pt casserole. Pour over the stock mixture, coating all the onion. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 7-9 minutes, or until the onions are tender, stirring after half the cooking time.
3 Stir in the tomato slices and microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute. Leave to stand for 3 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley, if wished.

Glazed onions

7¾ mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb pickling onions, peeled
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
15ml / 1tbls brown sugar
2.5ml / ½tsp cornflour
salt and pepper
1.5ml / ¼tsp mustard powder
15ml / 1tbls cider vinegar

SERVES 4

1 In a 1.1L / 2pt casserole, combine the onions and butter. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 7-9 minutes, or until tender, stir once. Drain and reserve the liquid for the glaze.
2 In a small bowl, combine the brown sugar, cornflour and seasoning. Stir in the vinegar and reserved cooking liquid.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 45-60 seconds, or until the sauce is clear and thick. Stir, pour over the onions and toss to coat. Serve as a vegetable accompaniment.

Top: *Braised Onions with Tomatoes;* **right:** *Glazed Onions*

Pork ribs

An economical cut of meat which is easy to cook in your microwave — pork ribs make great winter warmers served with crunchy sauerkraut, or ideal summer fare coated with a barbecue sauce.

Pork ribs are a tasty, economical and versatile cut of meat, which can be cooked in a variety of ways in the microwave cooker.

There are two different types of rib which come from different parts of the pig. Chinese or American-style spare ribs come from the underside of the animal. They can be cooked in a whole piece or in 3-4 rib pieces, American-style, or in individual ribs, Chinese-style. Spare rib chops come from just above the shoulder and are a much meatier cut.

The popular way to cook spare ribs in America and Australia is, of course, on the barbecue. With the microwave you can either make them completely in your cooker using a bottled or home-made barbecue sauce (see page 158), or start them in the microwave then transfer to the barbecue for a traditional finish (see page 279).

Pork ribs can also be roasted or braised in the microwave to make tasty fun meals to serve both family and friends.

Roasted ribs with Sweet and Sour Sauce

DON LAST

Roasted ribs

32 mins

Standing time: none

Roasted ribs make deliciously chewy finger food.

1.1-1.4kg / 2½-3lb pork spare ribs, cut into 2-3 rib pieces
2.5ml / ½tsp dried basil
1 onion, thinly sliced

SERVES 3-4

Braised ribs

28 mins

Standing time: none

Braised ribs are so tender that the meat will almost slip off the bone.

1.1-1.4kg / 2½-3lb pork spare ribs, cut into 2-3 rib pieces
2.5ml / ½tsp dried basil
1 onion, thinly sliced
1 lemon, thinly sliced
250ml / 9fl oz water

SERVES 3-4

Sweet and sour sauce

3 mins

Standing time: none

Use this sauce to glaze and flavour both the roasted or braised ribs. Alternatively, use one of the bottled barbecue sauces — now widely available. Add to the ribs and microwave, uncovered, at 50% (Medium) for 3-5 minutes.

50g / 2oz light brown soft sugar
15ml / 1tbls cornflour
125ml / 4fl oz pineapple juice
65ml / 2½fl oz wine vingear
30ml / 2tbls soy sauce

MAKES 225ml / 8fl oz SAUCE

1 In a 575ml /1pt jug combine the sugar and cornflour. Add the remaining ingredients and mix together well.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, until thick and translucent; stir every minute.

How to microwave roasted and braised ribs

Roasted ribs: *arrange on a roasting dish trying not to overlap. Sprinkle over the basil and onion rings. Cover with absorbent paper.*

Microwave *the ribs at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, then reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 12-15 minutes.*

Turn *the ribs over and arrange so the least cooked pieces are exposed and more cooked parts overlap. Re-cover and cook for a further 12-15 minutes.*

Braised ribs: *arrange in a casserole, top with the basil, onions and lemon slices and add the water. Cover with cling film rolled back or a lid.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 5 minutes; reduce to 50% (Medium) and cook as for roasted ribs for a further 20-25 minutes.*

Braised and roasted ribs: *drain any liquid from dish. Pour sauce over ribs. Microwave, uncovered, at 50% (Medium) for 3-5 minutes.*

RAY DUNS

Pork ribs with sauerkraut

35 mins

Standing time: none

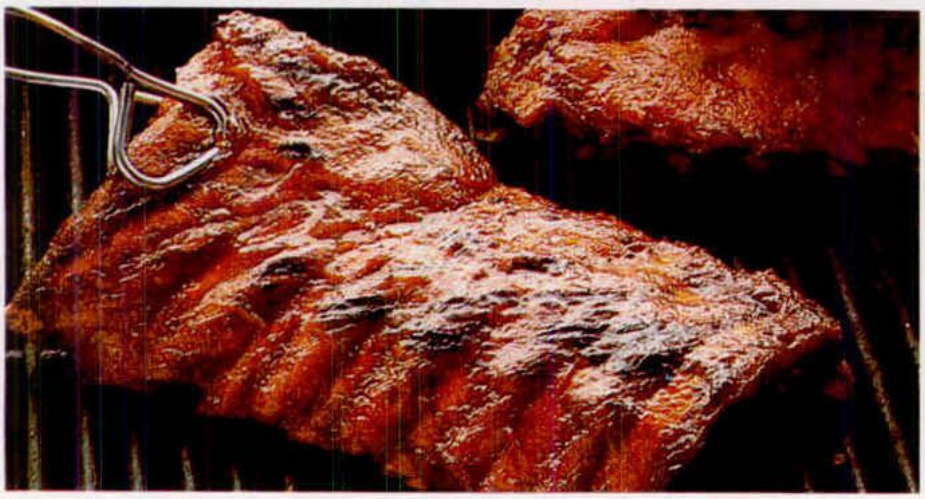
Sauerkraut is traditionally served with pork, and with your microwave this meal can be made easily in under an hour.

1.1-1.4kg / 2½-3lb pork spare ribs, cut into 2-3 rib pieces
30ml / 2tbls Worcestershire sauce mixed with 30ml / 2tbls water
680g / 1½lb can sauerkraut, drained
1 onion, chopped
1 apple, peeled and finely chopped
30ml / 2tbls brown sugar
5ml / 1tsp caraway seeds, (optional)
apple slices, to garnish

SERVES 3-4

1 Arrange the ribs around the sides and over the bottom of a 2.5L / 4½pt casserole, overlapping as little as possible. Cover with a lid or cling film and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
2 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 15 minutes.
3 Transfer the ribs to a plate and brush with the Worcestershire sauce mix. Set aside.
4 Drain any liquid from the casserole and add the sauerkraut, onion, apple, brown sugar and caraway seeds, if using. Mix well and arrange the ribs on top.
5 Cover and microwave for 15-20 minutes, until ribs are tender. Garnish with apple slices.

VARIATION
Canned or bottled sauerkraut is stored in brine. If you prefer, rinse the cabbage in cold water before using, then drain well.



Barbecued spare ribs

20 mins

Standing time: none

Summer is the time for setting up the barbecue and eating out of doors as often as possible. Use your microwave to speed the food along while you make sure the barbecue is hot.

1.4-1.8kg / 3-4lb pork spare ribs, in 3-4 rib pieces or a 6-8 rib joint
65ml / 2½fl oz water
bottled barbecue sauce, for basting

SERVES 4-6

1 Arrange the ribs in a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in dish or a 2.5L / 4½pt casserole, overlapping as little as possible for even cooking.
2 Add 65ml / 2½fl oz water and cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
3 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 15 minutes, turning the ribs over halfway through the cooking time.
4 Drain the ribs and transfer them to a barbecue grid placed over hot coals. Baste well with barbecue sauce.
5 Barbecue individual ribs or up to 4 rib pieces for 7-10 minutes and joints of 6-8 ribs for 15-20 minutes, or until tender. Turn over half way through.

Barbecued Spare Ribs

Chops with barbecue sauce

33 mins

Standing time: none

This is an easy mid-week supper for two. The rib chops are microwaved but the tangy sauce gives them a real barbecued flavour.

700g / 1½lb pork spare rib chops
225ml / 8fl oz water
50g / 2oz butter or margarine
1 small onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
100g / 4oz tomato ketchup
15ml / 1tbls Worcestershire sauce
5ml / 1tsp made English mustard
2 thin lemon slices 5ml / 1tsp lemon juice
5ml / 1tsp celery salt
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
dash of Tabasco sauce
60ml / 4tbls chilli sauce

SERVES 2

1 Place the spare rib chops and water in a 1.1L / 2pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 17-18 minutes, or until the meat is no longer pink, stirring twice. Drain and set aside.

2 Place the butter, onion and garlic in a 1.1L / 2pt bowl. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, or until the onion is tender. Stir halfway through cooking time. Stir in the remaining ingredients and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until the sauce is hot and bubbling. Stir once. Discard lemon slices.

3 Place the spare ribs on a roasting rack and brush with half the sauce. Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 11-12 minutes, or until the ribs are tender. Turn the spare ribs over and baste with the remaining sauce halfway through cooking.

VARIATION

To make an individual serving, halve all the ingredients. Prepare as directed but microwave chops in water at 50% (Medium) for only 10-11 minutes. Cook the butter, onion and garlic for 1½-2 minutes only and the sauce for 2-3 minutes. Finish the chops at 50% (Medium) for 8-9 minutes.

Easy appetizers

A selection of tempting appetizers and nibbles to serve with drinks or as a buffet party snack, can be prepared in a matter of minutes, with the help of the microwave cooker.

These tempting microwave savouries are just what the busy party-giver needs, especially when entertaining at short notice. They are quick to prepare — and the range of ideas wide enough to please all ages.

Serve Barbecue-style Frankfurters or Prawns and Pineapple as an unusual appetizer before the main meal. The other savouries can be arranged on a platter, to make an impressive buffet party snack, especially if garnished prettily. They are also delicious served with drinks.

Bacon Sticks, Barbecue-style Frankfurters, Seasoned Spinach Balls

DAVE KING

Bacon sticks

4 mins

Standing time: none

These can be assembled in advance and will stay crisp for several hours after microwaving.

5 streaky bacon rashers, rinds removed
50g / 2oz Parmesan cheese, grated
10 bread sticks

MAKES 10

VARIATION
Mix 15ml / 1tbls sesame seeds with the Parmesan cheese. Follow the method given (see right) then roll in the remaining cheese mixture before serving; sprinkled with fresh chopped parsley, if liked.

How to microwave Bacon sticks

Place *bacon rashers on a board and, using the flat side of a knife, stretch each rasher to double its length. Cut each rasher in half lengthwise. Dredge one side of the bacon strips with half the cheese and roll the bacon strips diagonally around the bread sticks from one end to the other.*

Repeat *with remaining bacon and bread sticks. Place on an absorbent paper-lined baking dish. Cover with a sheet of absorbent paper; microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes, rearranging after 2 minutes. Roll in the remaining cheese before serving the Bacon sticks hot or cold.*

Nachos

1½ mins

Standing time: none

16 large tortilla or corn chips
150g / 5oz Edam or low-fat Cheddar cheese, grated

MAKES 16

VARIATION
Zippy Nachos: Place a small slice of red or green pepper, pickled chilli, or pimiento-stuffed olive on each tortilla chip before sprinkling with cheese.

How to microwave Nachos

Place *a sheet of baking parchment or greaseproof paper on a 25cm / 10in glass or paper plate. Cover with the tortilla chips.*

Sprinkle *with grated cheese and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 1½-2 minutes, until cheese melts, rotating the plate once or twice. Serve hot.*

Nachos

RAY DUNS

Barbecue-style frankfurters

6 mins

Standing time: none

900g / 2lb frankfurters, quartered
500ml / 18fl oz bottled barbecue sauce
275g / 10oz orange marmalade
2.5ml / ½tsp mustard powder

SERVES 12-16 AS A NIBBLE OR 8-10 AS AN APPETIZER

1 Cut a cross halfway through each frankfurter quarter.
2 In a 1.7L / 3pt casserole, combine barbecue sauce, marmalade and mustard. Stir in frankfurters until thoroughly coated with mixture. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 6-7 minutes, or until hot, stirring every 2 minutes.

Seasoned spinach balls

9½ mins

Standing time: none

275g / 10oz pkt frozen chopped spinach
50g / 2oz butter or margarine
2 eggs
275g / 10oz Cheddar cheese, grated
100g / 4oz herb stuffing mix
large pinch of curry powder

MAKES 24

1 To thaw spinach, make a small hole in packet and place on a plate. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes, turning pack over after half the time. Drain thoroughly.
2 Place butter in a small dish. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds until melted. Set aside.
3 Beat eggs lightly. Stir in rest of ingredients, adding the melted butter last. Shape into 24 balls.
4 Arrange in a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in baking dish. Cover with baking parchment or greaseproof paper. Microwave at 70% (Medium-High) for 5-6 minutes, or until firm, rotating dish after half cooking time. Serve hot, garnished with tomato wedges and spring onions.

Party toasts

2 mins

Standing time: none

12 slices white or rye mini toast
Thousand Island Dressing
3 large slices corned beef
225g / 8oz sauerkraut, rinsed and drained
2 slices Gruyère or Emmental cheese, each cut into 6 pieces

MAKES 12

1 Spread toast with a small amount of Thousand Island dressing. Arrange in a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in baking dish lined with absorbent paper.
2 Layer each one with a slice of corned beef, cut to fit the size of toast. Cover with a spoonful of sauerkraut and a piece of cheese. Press lightly.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, or until hot and cheese melts, rotating the dish after half the time. Serve hot.

Prawns and pineapple

6 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

275g / 10oz packet frozen prawns
225ml / 8fl oz bottled French dressing
225g / 8oz can pineapple pieces or chunks
30ml / 2tbls tomato purée

SERVES 8-10 AS A NIBBLE OR 4-5 AS AN APPETIZER

1 Spread out prawns in a single layer in a shallow dish. Cover and microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 1-2 minutes. Stir and break up any frozen prawns. Cover and microwave again at 20-30% (Defrost) for 1-2 minutes.
2 In a 1.7L / 3pt casserole combine the dressing, pineapple with juice, tomato purée and prawns; cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.
3 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 4-5 minutes, or until hot, stirring every 2 minutes. Leave to stand for 5 minutes, covered. Serve hot or cold.

Left: *Party Toasts,* **right:** *Prawns and Pineapple*

Hot munchies

1 min

Standing time: none

Each of these recipes makes enough canapé mixture for 24 Melba toast rounds or small, crisp crackers. Soften the cream cheese at 100% (High) for 20-30 seconds before adding other ingredients.

HAWAIIAN CHICKEN

3 bacon rashers, cooked and crumbled (see page 150)
198g / 7oz can chopped chicken or previously cooked chicken, cut into small pieces
45ml / 3tbls crushed pineapple, drained
50g / 2oz walnuts, chopped

FAR-EAST TUNA

82g / 3¼oz can tuna, drained and flaked
30ml / 2tbls mayonnaise
45ml / 3tbls Pecan nuts, chopped
45ml / 3tbls crushed pineapple, drained
large pinch curry powder

BACON AND CHEESE

6 bacon rashers, cooked and crumbled
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, grated
45ml / 3tbls mayonnaise
10ml / 2tsp chopped parsley
5ml / 1tsp caraway seeds

SEASHORE CRAB

75g / 3oz cream cheese
150g / 5oz crabmeat, flaked
10ml / 2tsp Worcestershire sauce
2.5ml / ½tsp lemon juice
30ml / 2tbls chopped spring onion

HAM AND CHEESE

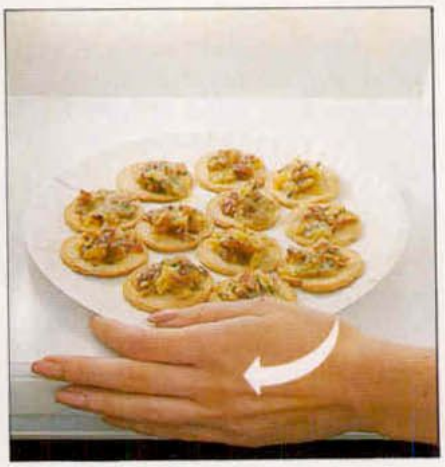
150g / 5oz ham spread
30ml / 2tbls finely-chopped onion
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, grated

Cook's notes

Simple garnishes, such as watercress or parsley sprigs, lemon or cucumber twists and slices of stuffed olive will make these nibbles even tastier and more appealing. For a more elaborate garnish use peeled prawns.

How to microwave Hot munchies

Combine *chosen ingredients in a small bowl until well mixed. Place half the mixture on 12 toast rounds or small crackers and arrange on a paper plate or absorbent paper.*



Microwave *at 100% (High) for 30-45 seconds, until heated, rotating the plate ¼ turn after 20 seconds. Repeat with remaining mixture on toast or crackers.*

Veal escalopes

Microwaved veal escalopes make dinner party meals in a matter of minutes. Tender veal steaks cooked in a sumptuous soured cream sauce or with a tasty Mozzarella cheese topping are just two of the alternatives.

Veal is naturally tender and fine grained and has little or no marbling of fat. Because of this it must be shielded during cooking in the microwave by covering the meat with a sauce or by coating the meat in breadcrumbs.

A veal escalope is a lean, boneless piece of meat cut across the grain, from the leg. Before cooking, it is usually placed between two sheets of cling film or wet greaseproof paper and beaten out to a 6mm / ¼in thickness with a rolling pin or meat bat as shown in the steps on page 286. The meat will then be thin enough to cook quickly and retain its moisture.

If veal escalopes are not readily available, boneless steak cutlets can be used instead. Beat them out to the right thickness or, if they are too thick, cut them across the width and then beat out.

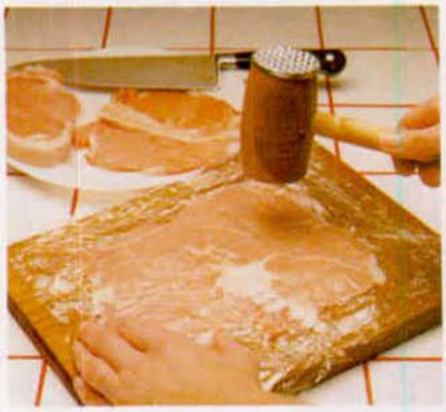
Add seasonings to bring out the delicate flavour of the veal or cook in a tasty sauce.

Hungarian Veal Paprika

PAUL WEBSTER

Preparing veal escalopes

Beat *out veal escalopes to a 6mm / ¼in thickness for extra fast cooking. Place between 2 sheets of wet greaseproof paper or cling film and beat with a meat bat or rolling pin.*



Use *veal steak cutlets if escalopes are hard to obtain. Cut them in half through the width if they are too thick, trim away fat and beat out in the same way as an escalope.*

Cut *strips of veal from escalopes or cutlets, after they have been beaten out to a 6mm / ¼in thickness. Cut the meat across the grain into even, 12mm / ½in strips.*

Veal and vegetable bake

14 mins

Standing time: none

4 veal escalopes or steaks, about 100g / 4oz each
1 onion, thinly sliced and separated into rings
175g / 6oz tomato purée
15ml / 1tbls plain flour
2.5ml / ½tsp dried basil
2.5ml / ½tsp dried oregano
10ml / 2tsp dried parsley
1.5ml / ¼tsp garlic powder
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
1.5ml / ¼tsp black pepper
2 large tomatoes, skinned and chopped
2 small courgettes, thinly sliced
1 green pepper, cored, seeded and cut into thin strips

SERVES 4

1 Beat out the veal with a rolling pin or meat bat (see steps).
2 Place the veal in a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in baking dish and top with the onion rings. Beat together the tomato, flour, basil, oregano, parsley, garlic powder, salt and pepper to form a smooth paste. Stir in the tomatoes, courgettes and green pepper. Spread the mixture over the veal and onions.
3 Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 14-15 minutes, or until the veal is no longer pink and the vegetables are tender. Rearrange the veal in the dish after 8 minutes cooking time.

Lemony veal with carrots

14 mins

Standing time: none

A refreshing summer lunch: easy to make in the microwave.

550g / 1¼lb veal escalopes
4 carrots, cut into matchsticks
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
5ml / 1tsp paprika
5ml / 1tsp dried parsley
2.5ml / ½tsp dried rosemary
1.5ml / ¼tsp pepper
125ml / 4fl oz white wine
45ml / 3tbls lemon juice
½ beef stock cube dissolved in 60ml / 4tbls hot water

SERVES 4

1 Beat out the veal with a rolling pin or meat bat (see steps). Cut into 2.5cm / 1in pieces.
2 Place the carrots in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Mix together the flour, paprika, parsley, rosemary and pepper and toss the meat in the mixture, to coat. Add to carrots.
3 Combine the wine, lemon juice and stock and stir into the meat and carrots. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 70% (Medium-High) for 14-15 minutes, or until the meat and carrots are tender. Stir 2-3 times during cooking. Serve with boiled rice.

Hungarian veal paprika

21½ mins

Standing time: none

4 veal escalopes, about 100g / 4oz each
25g / 1oz pkt cheese or white sauce mix
425ml / 15fl oz hot water
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
175g / 6oz tagliatelle
150ml / 5fl oz soured cream
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
large pinch of pepper
paprika
6-8 pepper rings, to garnish

SERVES 4

1 In a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in baking dish, combine the sauce mix, water and butter, stirring until the sauce mix is dissolved. Add the tagliatelle, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.
2 Stir in the soured cream, reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and cook for 5-7 minutes, until the noodles are tender. Stir.
3 Meanwhile combine the flour, salt and pepper. Beat out the escalopes with a meat bat or rolling pin to a thickness of 6mm / ¼in and dip in the flour to coat. Place on top of the pasta and cover with greaseproof paper.
4 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 8-10 minutes, until the veal is tender. Turn escalopes over and sprinkle pasta with paprika. Microwave, uncovered, for 3 minutes.
5 Microwave 6-8 pepper rings at 100% (High) for 30-45 seconds. Spoon some of the sauce over the escalopes if wished, garnish and serve.

Veal Mozzarella

15 mins

Standing time: none

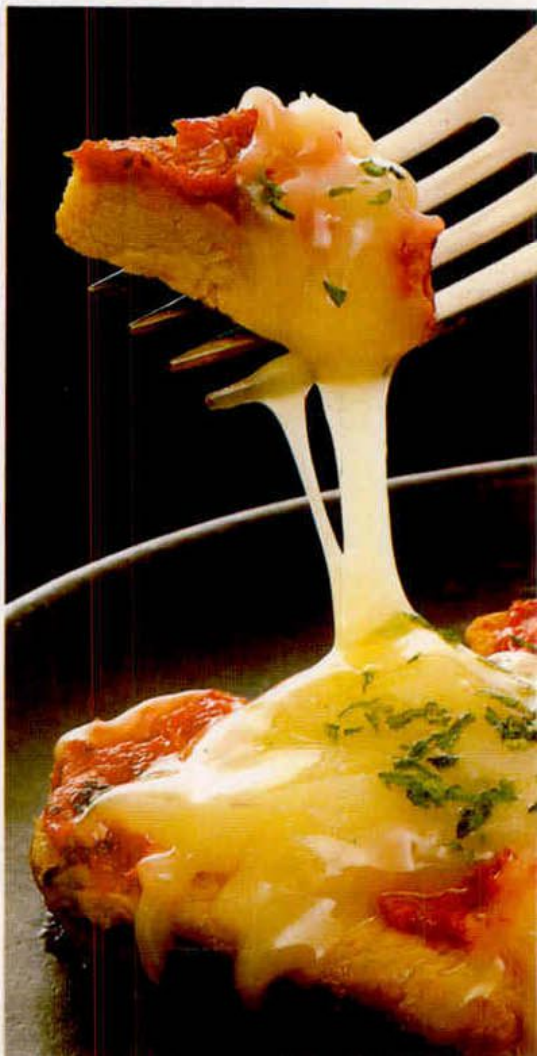
4 veal escalopes, about 100g / 4oz each
75g / 3oz Mozzarella cheese, grated
15ml / 1tbls chopped parsley

SAUCE
225g / 8oz tomato purée
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried oregano
2.5ml / ½tsp dried basil
1.5ml / ¼tsp garlic powder
salt and pepper
1.5ml / ¼tsp sugar
chopped parsley, to garnish

SERVES 4

1 Combine all the sauce ingredients, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute. Reduce to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 3 minutes. Set aside.
2 Place the veal in a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in dish. Cover with cling film and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 8-10 minutes until veal is no longer pink, turning over and rearranging once. Drain.
3 Pour the sauce over the veal then sprinkle with Mozzarella cheese and parsley. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 3-4 minutes, or until the sauce is hot and the cheese has melted. Rotate the dish halfway through cooking. Garnish with chopped parsley.

Veal Mozzarella



Veal rolls with ham and cheese

7¾ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

4 veal steak cutlets, about 100g / 4oz each
2 ham slices, each cut in half
20ml / 4tsp grated Parmesan cheese
1.5ml / ¼tsp pepper
2.5ml / ½tsp ground ginger
45ml / 3tbls cornflake crumbs
10ml / 2tsp dried parsley
20ml / 4tsp butter or margarine
20ml / 4tsp plain flour
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
150ml / ¼pt milk
60ml / 4tbls grated Edam or low fat Cheddar cheese,
chopped parsley, to garnish

SERVES 4

1 Beat out the veal cutlets with a meat bat or rolling pin (see steps). Place a piece of ham on each veal cutlet and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese, pepper and a small pinch of the ginger.

2 Roll each cutlet up tightly, secure with a wooden cocktail stick.

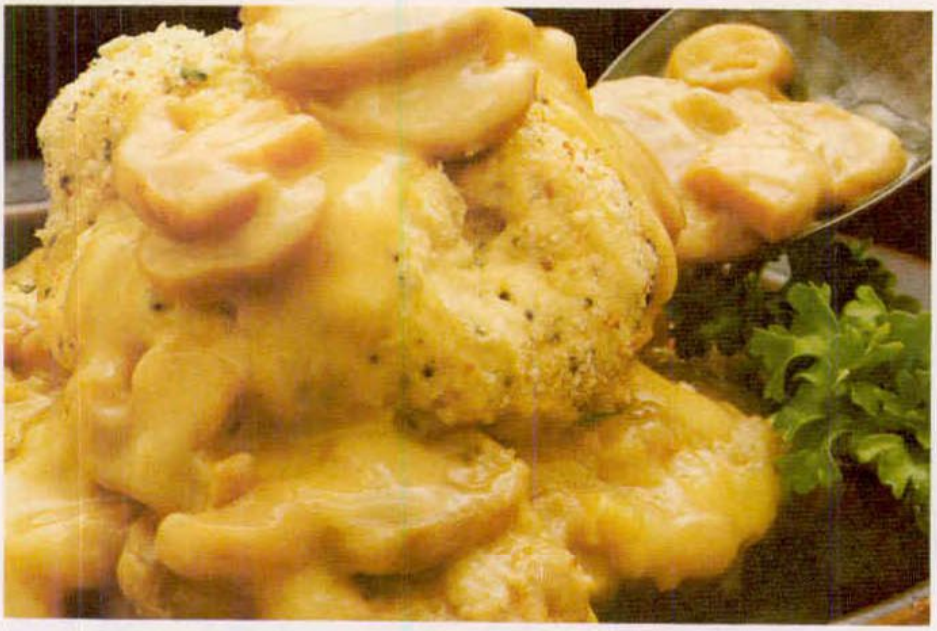
3 Mix the cornflake crumbs with 2.5ml / ½tsp dried parsley, then roll the meat in the crumb mixture.

4 Put the coated rolls in a 30 × 20cm/12 × 8in baking dish and cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 6-7 minutes, or until the meat is no longer pink, turning the rolls over twice. Drain, then cover and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

5 Increase the power to 100% (High) and microwave the butter in a covered 575ml / 1pt bowl for 45-60 seconds, until melted. Stir in the flour, salt, remaining ginger and dried parsley. Blend in the milk. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-1½ minutes, or until thickened, stirring once. Stir in the cheese until it melts. Pour the sauce over the veal rolls and garnish with fresh parsley.

VARIATION

Use 45ml / 3tbls bread crumbs instead of the cornflakes crumbs.



Veal with dumplings

21 mins

Standing time: none

4 veal escalopes, about 100g / 4oz each
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
5ml / 1tsp paprika
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried thyme
pinch of pepper
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
2 onions, quartered
295g / 10.4oz can condensed cream of chicken soup
150g / 5oz can sliced mushrooms, undrained

DUMPLINGS
175g / 6oz plain flour
10ml / 2tsp baking powder
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
10ml / 2tsp poppy seeds
5ml / 1tsp dried chives
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried thyme
125ml / 4fl oz milk
1 egg, beaten
25g / 1oz butter or margarine, melted at 100% (High) for 30-45 seconds
45ml / 3tbls seasoned breadcrumbs

SERVES 4

VARIATION
Instead of the breadcrumbs, substitute any dried stuffing mix of your choice to coat the dumplings. Use fresh instead of the dried herbs, doubling given quantities.

How to microwave Veal with dumplings

Combine *flour and seasoning; coat escalopes. Place butter in a 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in baking dish. Cover, microwave at 100% (High) for 1½ minutes. Add escalopes and onions.*

Cover *and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes. Reduce the power to 50% (Medium), then cook for 8 minutes, until the veal is tender. Turn halfway through. Leave to stand.*

Combine *the flour, baking powder and seasonings for the dumplings in a bowl. In a jug, combine milk, egg and melted butter. Blend the liquid into the flour mixture.*

Drop *rounded tablespoonfuls of dough into the seasoned breadcrumbs. Roll to coat on all sides. Reserve. Combine the soup, mushrooms and their juice and mix well.*

Pour *soup mixture over veal. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes, until hot. Top with dumplings. Microwave, uncovered, for 5 minutes, until dumplings are firm.*

RAY DUNN

Escalopes in soured cream

9 mins

Standing time: none

4 veal escalopes, about 100g / 4oz each
60ml / 4tbls plain flour
15ml / 1tbls butter or margarine,
15ml / 1tbls vegetable oil
275ml / 10fl oz soured cream
5ml / 1tsp plain flour
salt and pepper
chopped parsley, to garnish

SERVES 4

1 Heat a large browning dish for 5 minutes, or according to the manufacturer's instructions.
2 Meanwhile, beat out the escalopes with a meat bat or rolling pin to a thickness of 6mm / ¼in (see steps). Cut them in half and dip in the 60ml / 4tbls flour to coat.
3 Place the escalopes, butter and oil in the preheated dish, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute on each side.
4 In a medium-sized bowl, mix together all the remaining ingredients except the parsley and stir until smooth. Pour the sauce over the escalopes.
5 Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge, reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 7-8 minutes, or until the veal is tender, stirring the sauce twice during cooking. Sprinkle with parsley just before serving.

Cheesy veal noodles

18 mins

Standing time: 3-4 mins

1 large onion, chopped
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
60ml / 4tbls plain flour
2.5ml / ½tsp mustard powder
2.5ml / ½tsp mixed dried herbs
2.5ml / ½tsp pepper
450g / 1lb veal escalopes, cut into 12mm / ½in strips (see steps)
500ml / 18fl oz hot beef stock
100g / 4oz tagliatelle

Escalopes in Soured Cream

175g / 6oz mushrooms, sliced
15ml / 1tbls dry vermouth
100g / 4oz Cheddar cheese, grated

SERVES 4

1 In a 2-8L / 5pt casserole combine the onion and butter. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, or until the onion is soft, stirring once.
2 Put the flour, mustard, mixed herbs and pepper in a plastic bag. Add the meat and shake to coat.
3 Add the floured meat to the casserole and stir in the stock and noodles. Cover with cling film.
4 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 13-15 minutes, or until the meat and noodles are tender. Stir halfway through cooking.
5 Stir in the mushrooms and vermouth, cover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 3-4 minutes, or until heated. Stir once.
6 Stir in the cheese until it melts, then cover and leave to stand for 3-4 minutes.

Coffee time biscuits

Sliced crunchy biscuits bars are easy and irresistible favourites, and with your microwave you can produce delicious, foolproof results quickly and cleanly.

The charm of crunchy biscuit slices (apart from the taste) is their versatility. Once you master the technique of microwaving the different layers, you can mix and match the bases, fillings and toppings. Ingredients too can be substituted — try different nuts or toffee flavours.

For extra speed, use a food processor for crumble bases — a microwave cooker is an ideal teammate for up-to-date kitchen appliances, making cooking easier.

Left to right: *Choco-Fudge Fingers, Date Bars, Caramel Crispies, Lemon Cheesecake Bars.*

DON LAST

Toffee nut bars

12 mins

Standing time: none

75g / 3oz soft brown sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
100g / 4oz plain flour
175g / 6oz butter
100g / 4oz rolled oats
225g / 8oz caramel toffees
30ml / 2tbls milk
100g / 4oz icing sugar
25g / 1oz walnuts, chopped

MAKES 8-12

1 Place the sugar, salt and flour in a bowl, add 100g / 4oz of the butter and cut it in with a knife to make pea-sized pieces. Stir in the oats and rub in, using the fingers, until crumbly (or use a food processor or mixer).
2 Reserve a quarter of the crumble. Press the remainder over the base of a 20cm / 8in square dish. Place on an inverted saucer and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 4-6 minutes until just cooked, turning every 2 minutes.
3 Combine the toffees, remaining butter and the milk. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 4-5 minutes, stirring every 2 minutes.
4 Stir in the icing sugar and nuts, then spread over the cooked base. Sprinkle with the reserved crumble. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes until the mixture bubbles, turning every 2 minutes. Leave to cool, then cut into fingers to serve.

Lemon cheesecake bars

9½ mins

Standing time: none

75g / 3oz soft brown sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
100g / 4oz plain flour
100g / 4oz butter
100g / 4oz rolled oats
225g / 8oz cream cheese
50g / 2oz sugar
1 egg
finely grated zest of 1 lemon
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
30ml / 2tbls milk

MAKES 8-12

1 Place the sugar, salt and flour in a mixing bowl. Cut in the butter to make pea-sized pieces, then add the oats. Rub in, using the fingers, until evenly blended and crumbly.
2 Reserve a quarter of the crumble, and press the remainder over the base of a shallow 20cm / 8in square dish. Place the dish on an inverted saucer and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 4-6 minutes, turning every 2 minutes.
3 Put the cream cheese in a small bowl and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 30 seconds. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well until smooth. Spread over the base.
4 Sprinkle the reserved crumble over the top and microwave at 100% (High) for 5-7 minutes until firm in the centre, turning every 3 minutes. Allow to cool, then refrigerate. Cut into squares.

Chocolate bars

12 mins

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz soft brown sugar
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
175g / 6oz plain flour
175g / 6oz butter
175g / 6oz rolled oats
400g / 14oz can condensed milk
100g / 4oz plain chocolate chips
50g / 2oz chopped nuts (optional)

MAKES 12-16

1 Place the sugar, salt and flour in a mixing bowl. Cut in the butter to make pea-sized pieces. Add the oats and rub in until crumbly.
2 Reserve a third of the crumble and press the remainder evenly over the base of a shallow 30 × 20cm / 12 × 8in dish.
3 Place the dish on an inverted saucer and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 6-8 minutes, stirring 2-3 times, until just cooked.
4 Place the condensed milk in a small bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute. Stir in the chocolate chips, and if the chocolate does not melt, microwave for a further 2-3 minutes, stirring 2-3 times.
5 Spread the chocolate over the cooked base, then sprinkle with the reserved crumble. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5-8 minutes, or until the chocolate mixture starts to bubble in several places. Turn the dish every 3 minutes. Cool and cut into fingers.

Caramel crispies

5 mins

Standing time: none

200g / 7oz toffees
60ml / 4tbls water
100g / 4oz peanut butter
100g / 4oz puffed rice cereal
100g / 4oz salted peanuts

TOPPING
85g / 3½oz chocolate chips
50g / 2oz peanut butter
25g / 1oz margarine
MAKES 15-24

How to microwave Caramel crispie bars

Combine *the toffees, water and peanut butter in a large bowl. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-5 minutes until melted, stirring after 2 minutes. Mix well to blend.*

Stir *in the rice cereal and peanuts, then press the mixture into a well-greased 30 × 20cm / 8 × 12in shallow dish, spreading it evenly right to the edges.*

Mix *the remaining ingredients in a bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes to soften. Mix and spread over the rice cereal layer. Cut into bars when cooled.*

RAY DUNS

RAY DUNS

Choco-fudge fingers

5 mins

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz butter
100g / 4oz soft brown sugar
225g / 8oz rolled oats
45ml / 3tbls chopped nuts or 75ml / 5tbls desiccated coconut
15ml / 1tsp vanilla flavouring

TOPPING
50g / 2oz plain chocolate chips
50g / 2oz peanut butter

MAKES 9-16

1 Place the butter in a bowl, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes until melted. Blend in the remaining ingredients except the topping. Spread evenly in a greased 20cm / 8in square dish.
2 Place the dish on an inverted saucer and microwave at 100% (High) for 4-7 minutes until the mixture is bubbling all over. Give the dish ¼ turn every 2 minutes.
3 Sprinkle the chocolate chips over the top with dots of the peanut butter. When the chocolate is soft, spread it with the peanut butter to give a marbled effect. When almost set, cut into pieces.

Cereal peanut crunch

2 mins

Standing time: none

225g / 8oz chocolate or chocolate cake covering
50g / 2oz peanut butter
50g / 2oz puffed rice cereal
50g / 2oz salted peanuts
8 glacé cherries, chopped

MAKES 16-32

1 Break up the chocolate and mix with the peanut butter in a bowl. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes until soft. Stir to blend.
2 Add the remaining ingredients, mix well and spread evenly in a greased 20cm / 8in square tray.
3 Allow to cool and set before cutting into 16 squares. (Cut these diagonally to make small sweets).

Cereal Peanut Crunch

Date bars

9 mins

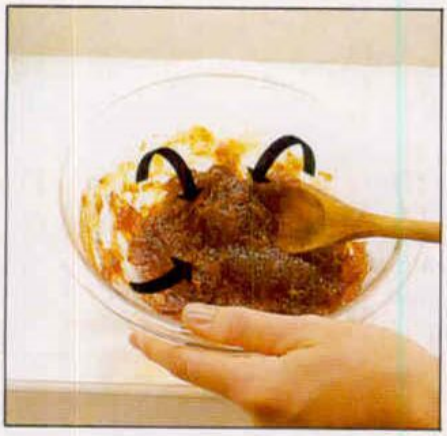
Standing time: none

100g / 4oz butter
75g / 3oz soft brown sugar
100g / 4oz plain flour
100g / 4oz rolled oats

FILLING
250g / 9oz chopped dates
100ml / 3½fl oz water
15ml / 1tbls caster sugar
30ml / 2tbls lemon juice

MAKES 9-16

How to microwave Date bars



Combine *all the ingredients for the filling in a mixing bowl. Microwave the filling at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes until thick and softened. Stir every minute. Allow to cool.*

Cut *the butter into the sugar and flour until pea-sized. Rub in the oats to make a crumbly mixture. Reserve a quarter, and press the rest into the base of a 20cm / 8in square dish.*

Place *the dish on an inverted saucer and microwave, uncovered, at 50% (Medium) for 3-5 minutes, until just cooked, giving the dish ¼ turn after 2-3 minutes.*

Reduce *the power to 30% (Low) if the base of the date bars starts to bubble in some areas after about 1½ minutes. This is in order to avoid overcooking in patches.*

Spoon *the cooled date filling mixture over the cooked base, spreading it evenly to the edges. Sprinkle the reserved crumble mixture over the top in an even layer.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 3-7 minutes or until the crumble is cooked, turning the dish every 2 minutes. Cool, then cut into slices to serve as a biscuit, or with cream as a dessert.*

STAR RECIPE

Burgundy beef

Microwaving is the perfect way to prepare a beef casserole. The even heating at 50% (Medium) power allows it to cook gently, ensuring tender cubes of beef in a rich and flavourful sauce.

This delicious casserole with its rich wine sauce and buttery potato accompaniment would make an excellent dinner party dish.

The Burgundy used in this recipe helps tenderize the beef as well as adding richness and flavour to the sauce. For a more economical casserole however, the wine can be replaced with beer, if preferred, although the appearance will not be quite as colourful.

To ensure even cooking, the cubes of beef should be uniform in size. Small pieces or cubes of food cook faster than large ones and since microwaves penetrate food by 2-3cm / ¾/1½in, uniform pieces of under 5cm / 2in in diameter cook from all sides.

Once the casserole is cooked, it must be left to stand for 15 minutes to allow time for the meat to become fully tender. During the standing time, the potato accompaniment can be cooked, ready to serve with the casserole.

Burgundy beef

75½ mins

Standing time: 15 mins

45ml / 3tbls plain flour
700g / 1½lb chuck steak, cut into 2cm / ¾in cubes
225g / 8oz carrots, cut into 6mm / ¼in slices
2 onions, sliced
225ml / 8fl oz Burgundy or red wine

PAUL WEBSTER

425g / 15oz can tomatoes, drained and chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 beef stock cube, crumbled
5ml / 1tbls Worcestershire sauce
salt and pepper
100g / 4oz frozen peas
fresh bay leaves, to garnish

BUTTERED POTATOES
50g / 2oz butter or margarine
900g / 2lb potatoes, unpeeled and cut into eights
25g / 1oz grated Parmesan cheese

SERVES 4

VARIATION
If you prefer to incorporate the potatoes into the casserole itself, stir in 225-450g / 8oz-1lb peeled; medium-sized potatoes, cut in 6mm / ¼in slices, at the beginning of cooking time.

RAY DUNS

How to microwave Burgundy beef

Toss *the flour and cubes of beef together in a 3.4L / 6pt casserole, until the beef is thoroughly coated. Add the remaining ingredients, except the frozen peas; stir.*

Cover *with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 50-60 minutes until the beef is fork tender. Stir once during the cooking time.*

Stir *in the peas, then cover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 10 minutes. Leave to stand, covered, for 15 minutes to allow the meat to tenderize.*

Place *the butter in a small bowl, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds until melted. Arrange potato pieces in a large dish. Brush with half the melted butter.*

Sprinkle *with salt and pepper to taste. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Brush with the remaining butter.*

Sprinkle *with the cheese. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 10-12 minutes or until tender. Garnish the casserole with bay leaves.*

Carrots

Carrots can be served in a host of delectable ways — as an accompaniment or as a starter — and the microwave makes the most of the distinctive flavour of this popular and inexpensive vegetable.

Carrots are available all year round. Baby carrots with tender skin can be scrubbed and cooked whole. Larger carrots should be peeled or scraped, then cut up for faster, more even cooking. Older carrots have a tough, woody core. Halve them lengthwise and pry out the pale core before microwaving. Remember that the microwave cannot work wonders on old vegetables, so choose good quality produce.

Carrots are an excellent vegetable accompaniment. Try them cooked with celery, page 299, with rosemary, page 300, or with soured cream, page 301, or as a delicious dip.

Vary *the appearance of carrots by cutting them in different ways. Cut into 5cm / 2in lengths or julienne strips, or dice or grate. Slice into rounds or on the diagonal for oval shapes. Always make sure pieces are the same size.*

How to select and store carrots

Look *for firm, well-formed, smooth carrots, bright orange to orange-red in colour. Small to medium carrots have a better flavour.*

Avoid *shrivelled or soft carrots and those with large green areas. Yellow tops on bunched carrots or green shoots on trimmed carrots indicate age.*

Trim *the tops of carrots to save space and avoid mess. Do not wash until ready to use. Store in a plastic bag in the bottom of the refrigerator.*

Celery carrots

10 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

225g / 8oz carrots, sliced 6mm / ¼in thick
2 celery stalks, thinly sliced
30ml / 2tbls water
salt
397g / 14oz can tomatoes in natural juice, drained and juice reserved
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
4 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
2.5ml / ½tsp sugar
pinch of pepper

SERVES 4-6

1 Combine the carrots, celery, water and salt in a casserole; cover with vented cling film or a loose-fitting lid. Microwave at 100% (High) for 7-9 minutes, or until fork tender, stirring after half the cooking time. Leave to stand for 3 minutes. Do not drain.
2 In a small dish, chop the tomatoes and add the reserved tomato juice and flour, blending until smooth. Add to the casserole.
3 Stir in the remaining ingredients. Cover with vented cling film or the lid and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes or until thickened, stirring once.

VARIATION
Substitute 1 green pepper, sliced into strips, in place of the celery.

How to microwave sliced carrots

Place *225g / 8oz sliced carrots in a casserole with 30ml / 2tbls water or 25g / 1oz butter; cover.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 4-7 minutes, stirring once. Leave to stand 3 minutes. Drain the water, if using.*

Orangy carrots

10 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

The orange rind adds a really zesty flavour to these carrots.

450g / 1lb frozen whole baby carrots
30ml / 2tbls orange juice
5ml / 1tsp grated orange rind

SERVES 4

1 Place the carrots in a casserole. Sprinkle with the orange juice and cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 10-12 minutes.
2 Sprinkle with the grated orange rind and stir to coat. Let stand, covered for 3 minutes.

Sunshine carrots

2¼ mins

Standing time: none

15g / ½oz butter or margarine
30ml / 2tbls honey
2.5ml / ½tsp lemon juice
300g / 10.6oz can sliced carrots, drained

SERVES 4

1 Place the butter or margarine in a casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds, or until melted.
2 Mix in the honey and lemon juice. Stir in the carrots. Microwave, covered, at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, or until heated, stirring after half the time.

Pickled carrots

4 mins

Standing time: none

350g / 12oz baby whole carrots
50ml / 2fl oz water

PICKLING LIQUID
175ml / 6fl oz cider vinegar
175ml / 3oz sugar
2.5-5ml / ½-1tsp salt
large pinch of celery seed or salt
large pinch of mustard seed
large pinch of dried crushed red chillies
4 whole cloves
4 whole peppercorns
2 small garlic cloves, peeled
1 bay leaf
1 cinnamon stick, 5-7.5cm / 2-3in long

MAKES A 575ML / 1PT JAR

1 Wash and scrub or peel the carrots; trim the ends. Place in a casserole with the water and cover with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until tender-crisp, stirring after half the time.
2 Place the carrots under cold running water until cool; drain. Pack into a 575ml / 1pt sterilized jar and set aside.
3 In a casserole, combine the pickling liquid ingredients. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes, or until boiling, stirring once to dissolve the sugar and salt.
4 Pour over the carrots in the jar; cover. Cool, then refrigerate for 1 week before serving. Serve with pieces of cheese as a snack with drinks. Store in the refrigerator for up to 1 month.

Cook's notes

Before microwaving the carrots, ensure that they fit in the jar standing upright. Trim with a knife to fit, if necessary.

Use a knife to push the whole herbs and spices down into the jar once the carrots have been added. This helps even distribution of flavour.

Glazed baby carrots

6½ mins

Standing time: 3 mins

350g / 12oz baby whole carrots
30ml / 2tbls water

GLAZE
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
22.5ml / 1½tbls brown sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp cinnamon
large pinch of ground cloves
large pinch of salt
30ml / 2tbls chopped walnuts

SERVES 4

1 Microwave the carrots as directed in the chart, opposite.
2 In a small bowl, microwave the butter at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds, or until melted. Stir in the brown sugar, cinnamon, cloves and salt. Drain the carrots. Pour over the glaze and stir to coat.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 20 seconds to melt the sugar if needed; stir. Garnish with walnuts.

Carrots with rosemary

10 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

450g / 1lb carrots, sliced 6mm / ¼in thick
125ml / 4fl oz water
10ml / 2tsp cornflour
¼ chicken stock cube
5ml / 1tsp dried chives
2.5ml / ½tsp crushed fresh rosemary

SERVES 4-6

1 In a casserole, combine the carrots and 50ml / 2fl oz water. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes; stir once. Do not drain.
2 Blend the remaining water and cornflour. Add the other ingredients and stir into the carrots.
3 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes or until thickened, stirring once.

Pickled Carrots

Carrots in soured cream

4½ mins

Standing time: 3 mins

225g / 8oz carrots, cut into julienne strips
30ml / 2tbls salted water
2 spring onions, chopped
30ml / 2tbls soured cream
15ml / 1tbls soft light brown sugar
1.5ml / ¼tsp dill weed
pinch of pepper

SERVES 3-4

1 In a casserole, combine the carrots and water; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4-7 minutes, or until fork tender, stirring once; drain.
2 Stir the remaining ingredients into the carrots. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds, or until heated through. Leave to stand for 3 minutes.

Carrots in Soured Cream

Spicy carrot dip

10 mins

Standing time: 3 mins

450g / 1lb carrots, sliced
30ml / 2tbls water
salt and pepper
2.5ml / ½tsp paprika
large of pinch of cayenne pepper
2.5ml / ½tsp cumin
30ml / 2tbls wine vinegar
45ml / 3tbls olive oil
2 garlic cloves, crushed
45ml / 3tbls whipped cream
black olives, to garnish

SERVES 4-6

1 Combine the carrots and water in a casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 10-12 minutes, or until very soft. Leave to stand for 3 minutes; drain.
2 Mash the carrots. Stir in the remaining ingredients except the cream; cool. Fold in the cream and chill. Garnish with olives and serve with French or pitta bread.

Microwave times for carrots

TYPE	AMOUNT	MICROWAVE TIME AT 100% (HIGH)	PROCEDURE
Fresh carrots			
Baby or finger, whole	350g / 12oz	6-8 mins	Place in a casserole with 30ml / 2tbls water. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge or a loose-fitting lid. Stir once during the cooking time. Let stand, covered, for 3 minutes. Drain.
5cm / 2in slices	225 / 8oz 450g / 1lb	6-8 mins 8-10 mins	As above.
6mm / ¼in slices	225g / 8oz 450g / 1lb	4-7 mins 8-10 mins	As above.
Frozen carrots			As above.
Baby or small, whole	454g / 1lb	10-12 mins	
Crinkle cut 6mm / ¼ slices	454g / 1lb	8-10 mins	
Canned carrots			
Slices	300g / 10.6oz	2-3 mins	Drain off all but 30ml / 2tbls liquid. Place in a casserole and cover with cling film rolled back at one edge or a loose-fitting lid. Stir once during the cooking time. Drain.
Whole	550g / 1.2lb	3-4 mins	
Baby	397g / 14oz	2-3 mins	

Water ices and sorbets

You can produce the most refreshing ices using your microwave, with less mess and more flavour. Try fresh, soft fruit from the garden or exotic lychee or mango for a real taste of summer.

Tangy and fresh, and deliciously flavoursome, water ices and sorbets make an impressive finish to any dinner party, or can be eaten as a between-meals refresher on a hot summer's day.

Home-made ones are much cheaper than commercially produced ones and have always been the delight of freezer owners. With a microwave, they become even quicker and easier to make.

A water ice is usually made with a sugar syrup, flavoured with fruit juice or purée. After partial freezing, it is removed from the freezer and beaten to break down the ice crystals and make a smooth ice. A sorbet is made the same way, but whisked egg white is beaten in after partial freezing to make an even smoother mixture than a water ice.

Making the sugar syrup in the microwave saves on time and washing up — everything can be done in the same bowl. The syrup will not burn and rarely goes grainy as it can do in a saucepan. A fruit purée is also quicker to make in the microwave as the fruit cooks in a fraction of the time it takes conventionally.

Always use white sugar as brown gives the finished ice a poor colour. Any type of white sugar is suitable. In the recipes given, granulated sugar has been used — if you use caster sugar, it dissolves more quickly; lump or preserving sugar dissolve more slowly.

Put the sugar and water or fruit juice in a bowl that you are sure is safe at high temperatures, as dissolving sugar may become very hot indeed. Ovenproof glass is ideal as it is proof even against boiling sugar. Alternatively, use a glass measuring jug to save on washing up. Stir the syrup from time to time as the sugar dissolves, then allow to cool before using. If you are cooking fruit in the microwave allow that to cool before using too.

Freeze the flavoured mixture in a shallow container if possible, so that it freezes more quickly. Take it out once it is firm and beat it to break down the ice crystals. Beaten with a fork or wire whisk, the ice will be rather hard, an electric beater gives a softer ice. A food processor gives the best results of all — a smooth, fine-textured ice that is shiny to look at as well as delightful to eat. And, if you make a sorbet by adding whisked egg white to the ice, the result will be even more soft and delicious.

Clockwise left to right: *Lemon Water Ice, Lychee Water Ice, Raspberry Orange Ice*

PAUL WEBSTER

How to microwave water ices

Pour *the water or drained juice and sugar into a measuring jug or bowl. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge or a loose fitting lid.*

Microwave *at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes, or until the sugar has dissolved, stirring once. Allow to cool. Stir in the remaining ingredients.*

Freeze *for 3-4 hours; stir once. Beat, then freeze until firm. To serve, soften at 20-30% (Defrost) for 2-4 minutes or 30 seconds for 1 serving.*

Lemon water ice

1½ mins

Standing time: none

125ml / 4fl oz water
100g / 4oz sugar
juice of 3 lemons
mint leaves, to decorate

SERVES 3-4

1 Pour the water and sugar into a measuring jug. Microwave as directed above, allow to cool.
2 Add the lemon juice and pour into a freezer container. Freeze and beat as directed in step 3 above. Spoon into lemon shells and freeze until firm.
3 To serve, microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 2-4 minutes. Decorate with mint leaves.

Raspberry orange ice

1½ mins

Standing time: none

125ml / 4fl oz water
100g / 4oz sugar
juice of 2 fresh oranges
100g / 4oz fresh raspberries
30ml / 2tbls orange liqueur
15ml / 1tbls concentrated orange juice
orange segments and raspberries, to decorate

SERVES 4-6

1 Put the water and sugar in a measuring jug and microwave as directed in steps 1-2 above.
2 Stir in the fresh orange juice, raspberries, liqueur and concentrated orange juice into the syrup. Purée, then pour into a freezer container. Freeze for 6-8 hours until firm, stirring once. Purée and freeze as directed in step 3 above.
3 To serve, microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 2-4 minutes. Decorate with raspberries and orange segments.

Lychee water ice

1½ mins

Standing time: none

425g / 15oz lychees in heavy syrup
30ml / 2tbls lemon juice
15ml/ 1tbls sugar
small rolled biscuits and fresh mint sprigs, to decorate (optional)

SERVES 4

1 Drain the lychee syrup into a measuring jug. Reserve the fruit.
2 Add the lemon juice and sugar to the lychee syrup. Microwave and freeze as directed in steps 2 and 3, above.
3 To serve, microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 2-4 minutes. Spoon into glasses with the reserved lychees and decorate each glass with 2 rolled biscuits and a sprig of mint, if liked.

How to microwave sorbets

Pour *the water or drained juice and sugar into a jug or bowl. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 1½-2 minutes to dissolve the sugar.*

Add *and microwave the remaining ingredients as directed in recipes; cool. Freeze for 2-4 hours, stirring once. Beat until smooth.*

Fold *in the beaten egg white and freeze again until firm. To serve, microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 2-4 minutes to soften slightly.*

DAVE KING

Orange sorbet

2 mins

Standing time: none

275ml / ½pt fresh orange juice
juice of ½ lemon
75g / 3oz sugar
1 egg white

SERVES 6-8

1 Put the orange and lemon juice and sugar in a measuring jug. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, or until the sugar is dissolved, stirring once; cool.
2 Pour into a freezer container. Freeze and beat as directed in step 2 above.
3 Whisk the egg white until standing in soft peaks. Fold into the half-frozen mixture and pour into 6-8 orange shells. Freeze until firm.
4 To serve, soften in the microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 2-4 minutes. Alternatively, remove from the freezer and refrigerate 15-20 minutes before serving.

Microtip

To extract the maximum juice from citrus fruit, microwave an orange, lemon, lime or grapefruit at 100% (High) for 20-35 seconds. This makes them easier to squeeze, and ensures a larger quantity of juice from each fruit.

Blackcurrant sorbet

4½ mins

Standing time: none

125ml / 4fl oz water
100g / 4oz sugar
225g / 8oz frozen blackcurrants
15ml / 1tbls crème de cassis or orange-flavoured liqueur
1 egg white

SERVES 6-8

1 Put the water and sugar in a bowl and microwave at 100% (High) as directed in step 1, left.
2 Mix in the blackcurrants and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until the fruit is tender, stirring once or twice, then leave to cool.
3 Pour into a food processor or blender and purée until smooth. Sieve the mixture into a freezer container. Freeze and beat as directed in step 2, left.
4 Whisk the egg white until stiff and standing in peaks. Fold into the half-frozen mixture and freeze the sorbet until firm.
5 Soften in the microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 2-4 minutes before serving.

Mango sorbet

2 mins

Standing time: none

425g / 15oz can mango slices in heavy syrup
15ml / 1tbls sugar
30ml / 2tbls lemon juice
1 egg white

SERVES 4-6

1 Drain the mango slices, reserving the syrup. Put the syrup, sugar and lemon juice into a measuring jug. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes or until the sugar is dissolved, stirring after half the time. Cool.
2 Put the syrup and reserved mango slices in a food processor or blender and purée until smooth. Turn into a freezer container. Freeze and beat as directed in step 2, above left.

DAVE KING

Top: *Blackcurrant Sorbet;* **below:** *Mango Sorbet*

3 Whisk the egg until stiff and standing in peaks. Fold into the half-frozen mixture and freeze until firm.
4 Soften in the microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 2-4 minutes before serving.

Freezer notes

Using a food processor to break down the sorbets during freezing gives them a lovely light, smooth texture, but you will need to allow about 6-8 hours freezing after beating; otherwise leave for 3-4 hours after beating.

Microwaving pasta

If your pasta sticks and clogs when you cook it conventionally, try it in the microwave. You can avoid starchy, sticky saucepans and the pasta is less likely to turn mushy.

Pasta should always be cooked in a large quantity of boiling water — keeping the large amount of water at simmering point makes the cooking rather long compared with other foods. But if you use a shallow baking dish rather than a deep bowl you can cut the water heating time to a minimum. Cover the dish with cling film to hold in the steam and help the water boil more quickly. Alternatively boil the water in an electric kettle before you start.

Always make sure added salt has dissolved and the water is really boiling before you add the pasta, then the water will stay fully hot throughout the cooking. Use a large dish that allows plenty of room for water and pasta shapes, remembering that you will want to stir during cooking. Use a long, flat dish for long shapes. If the spaghetti is fractionally long for the dish, break off the ends. As in

Clockwise from top: *Crab sauce served on green and white pasta spirals, pasta shells and vermicelli.*

PAUL WEBSTER

conventional cooking, a little oil added to the water is an additional precaution against sticking.

Different shapes and thicknesses of pasta take different times — thin ribbons of tagliatelle cook more quickly than thicker macaroni. Use the chart as a guide but remember that different brands vary too, so test frequently to avoid overcooking. When cooking larger quantities of pasta, increase the volume of water and the size of the dish — the time for the pasta to cook will be the same. You may find it easier to cook larger quantities of pasta conventionally.

Cook pasta until it is just *al dente* — tender but slightly crisp to the bite. If you overcook it, it will be unpleasantly soft. If you can just cut through a piece with your thumbnail, it is ready to eat.

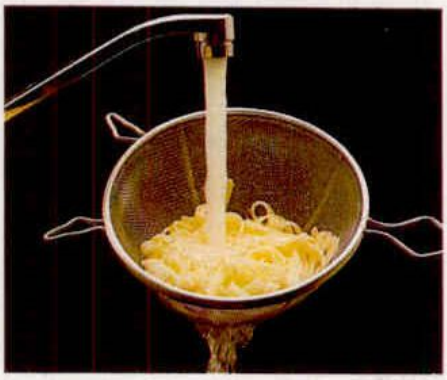
When the pasta is cooked, tip it into a colander or sieve to drain thoroughly and rinse it under running water. Use hot water if the dish is to be served hot, cold for salad. This rinsing removes any excess starch which might make the pieces stick together. Let all the water drain away then, for serving hot, return it to the hot bowl and toss it in a little oil or butter until it glistens, and season with plenty of coarsely-ground black pepper. Pasta that is to be stuffed, such as cannelloni or lasagne, should be even more thoroughly drained by placing on a clean tea towel or several layers of absorbent paper until you are ready to use it.

Cooked pasta reheats well, whether in sauce or alone. Reheat two servings in a greased bowl with a knob of butter in a dish covered with cling film rolled back at one edge. Microwave at 100% (High) for about 2-2½ minutes or until hot, stirring very gently, if possible. Leftover pasta can also be frozen and then thawed and reheated by microwave. This avoids waste, but does not save on time — it takes as long to thaw and reheat as to cook from fresh.

How to microwave pasta

Combine *the water, salt and vegetable or olive oil in suitable dish (see chart). Cover with cling film and microwave at 100% (High) until the water comes to the boil.*

Add *the pasta to the dish and microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for the time directed in the chart, until* al dente *— tender but still firm.*



Leave *to stand, covered, for 5 minutes then rinse under hot or cold water. Drain thoroughly. Place pasta to be stuffed on absorbent paper or a tea towel to dry thoroughly.*

Microwaving times for pasta

PASTA	AMOUNT	DISH SIZE	WATER	SALT	TIME ON 100% (HIGH)
Cannelloni	25-100g / 1-4oz 2-8 tubes	25 × 20cm / 10 × 8in	700ml / 1¼pt	2.5ml / ½tsp	10-12 minutes
Lasagne	3-12 sheets	25 × 20cm / 10 × 8in	700ml / 1¼pt	2.5ml / ½tsp	7-10 minutes
Macaroni	25-100g / 1-4oz	2.3L / 4 pt	700ml / 1¼pt	2.5ml / ½tsp	8-10 minutes
Shells	25-100g / 1-4oz	2.3L / 4pt	700ml / 1¼pt	2.5ml / ½tsp	9-11 minutes
Jumbo shells	25-100g / 1-4oz	2.3L / 4pt	700ml / 1¼pt	2.5ml / ½tsp	10-12 minutes
Rigatoni	50-100g / 2-4oz	2.3L / 4pt	700ml / 1¼pt	2.5ml / ½tsp	9-11 minutes
Spaghetti	25-100g / 1-4oz	25 × 20cm / 10 × 8in	700ml / 1¼pt	2.5ml / ½tsp	7-10 minutes
Tagliatelle	25-100g / 1-4oz	2.3L / 4pt	700ml / 1¼pt	2.5ml / ½tsp	6-8 minutes
Vermicelli	25-100g / 1-4oz	2.3L / 4pt	700ml / 1¼pt	2.5ml / ½tsp	2-3 minutes

Cheesy cannelloni

17 mins

Standing time: 8 mins

A smooth sauce and a rich, creamy filling can be microwaved in minutes to serve with cannelloni.

4 cannelloni tubes
parsley, to garnish

FILLING
100g / 4oz cottage cheese, well drained
50g / 2oz Mozzarella cheese, grated
45ml / 3tbls Parmesan cheese, grated
1 egg, lightly beaten
2.5ml / ½tsp dried basil
good pinch of salt
pepper

SAUCE
10ml / 2tsp cornflour
175ml / 6fl oz tomato juice
10ml / 2tsp olive oil
2.5ml / ½tsp dried basil
2.5ml / ½tsp sugar
pepper
45ml / 3tbls milk
15ml / 1tbls red wine or port

SERVES 2

1 Cook the cannelloni as directed in the chart. Drain, rinse and drain again, then place on absorbent paper or a clean tea towel.
2 Combine all the filling ingredients and beat with a wooden spoon until well blended.
3 Fill each cannelloni tube with the mixture and place in a small, shallow casserole or dish.
4 Place the cornflour in an 850ml /1½pt bowl, add a small amount of tomato juice. Stir until smooth.
5 Mix in the remaining tomato juice, olive oil, basil, sugar and pepper, to taste.
6 Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes or until slightly thickened, stirring every minute.
7 Blend in milk and wine or port. Pour over stuffed cannelloni.
8 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium), cover and microwave for 5-9 minutes or until hot. Leave to stand for 3 minutes. Garnish with parsley.

PAUL WEBSTER

Vermicelli with crab sauce

9 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

Serve this delicious pasta dish as an appetizer for two people for a special occasion meal. It also makes an excellent quick supper for one person.

50g / 2oz vermicelli
½ onion, finely chopped
25g / 1oz butter
15ml / 1tbls olive oil
good pinch of garlic powder
15ml / 1tbls plain flour
15ml / 1tbls chopped parsley
good pinch of salt and pepper
169g / 5.6oz can crab, juice reserved
30ml / 2tbls milk
30ml / 2tbls tomato purée
grated Parmesan cheese
lemon twists and parsley, to garnish

SERVES 2

1 Cook the vermicelli as directed in the chart, drain and set aside.
2 In a 1.4L / 2½pt bowl, combine the onion, butter, olive oil and garlic powder. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes or until the butter melts and the onion is tender.
3 Blend in the flour. Stir in the parsley, salt, pepper, crab and juice, milk and tomato purée. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes or until thickened, stirring once or twice.
4 Rinse the vermicelli, then drain again. Pour the sauce over the hot vermicelli and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes.
5 Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese, if wished. Garnish with lemon twists and flat-leaved parsley.

VARIATION
This tasty sauce will go well with all types of pasta. Simply follow the directions in the chart and combine the sauce with your favourite pasta shape.

Basic breadmaking

Using a microwave, you can enjoy the luxury of fresh bread in half the time it normally takes for the dough to rise and bake. The results are light, moist and irresistible.

To microwave bread successfully, it is important to have some understanding of the different processes involved — then you can make sure that nothing can go wrong.

Type of flour
The elastic dough essential for well-risen loaves is made with wheat flour, as the gluten present gives the dough its stretchy quality and its ability to expand and hold air. Flour labelled 'strong' is particularly suitable, as it has an extra high gluten content and greater elasticity for rising well.

Yeast
Fresh yeast is available, but the dried variety is more commonly used as it can be stored without deterioration for up to six months. As a living organism, yeast feeds on the sugars present in the unbaked dough and, given warmth and moisture, releases the air which makes the dough rise.

Kneading
Good kneading is as essential for microwaved breads as for conventionally baked ones. Kneading blends the ingredients and 'stretches' the gluten in the flour to enable the dough to rise well.

Rising dough
A period of rising and proving is necessary for yeast cells to develop properly. While this is conventionally done in a warm place, it takes half the time in the microwave, but care must be taken not to start cooking the bread.

White Bread Rolls, Four Grain Bread (made in a ring and a loaf dish).

DON LAST

Basic rich bread

9 mins

Standing time: 2 mins

This basic dough can be shaped to make loaves or rolls.

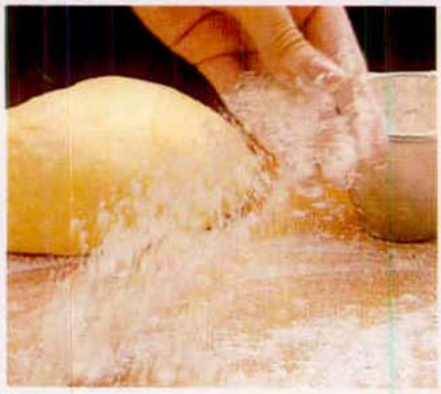
5ml / 1tsp dried yeast
45ml / 3tbls warm water
30ml / 2tbls sugar
125ml / 4fl oz warm milk
1 egg
5ml / 1tsp salt
50g / 2oz butter
yellow food colouring (optional)
300g / 11oz strong white flour

MAKES A 900g / 2lb LOAF

How to prepare Basic rich dough

1 Sprinkle *the dried yeast onto the warm water, mix well with 5ml / 1tsp of the sugar and stand in a warm place for 15 -30 minutes until frothy.*

2 Combine *the yeast liquid with the remaining ingredients except the flour in a large jug or bowl and beat well until smooth.*



5 Sprinkle *a little more flour over the surface if the dough sticks. (Do not add much flour, or the consistency will be changed). With kneading the dough will become smoother and more elastic and lose its stickiness.*

6 Test *the dough to see if it is ready after 5-10 minutes' kneading. Hold it in your hand for 15 seconds: if it sticks to your hand, it requires more kneading. Continue kneading until the dough does not stick.*

7 Look *closely at the dough; if it is properly kneaded, there will be air bubbles under the stretched surface which should be smooth. When it is sufficiently kneaded, there should be no surface stickiness.*

10 Test *the dough by pushing your fingers into it; if the impressions remain, it has risen enough. On a board, punch down the dough with your fist. Return it to the bowl or jug, cover and leave to rest for 5 minutes.*

11 Shape *the dough as required and leave to rise again (known as proving). Cover the bowl with non-stick paper if proving by microwave, or cling film or a tea towel if rising the dough at room temperature.*

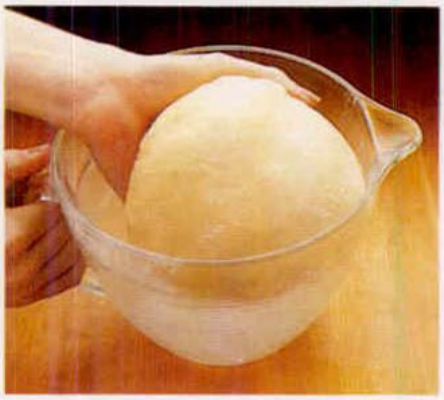
12 Judge *the rise of the dough by its appearance (see above). Over-rising (right) makes the gluten weak, so it may collapse. Under-risen dough (left) will make heavy bread. The middle loaf has risen sufficiently.*

3 Add *the flour gradually to the mixture to form a very stiff dough, beating it well to distribute the yeast evenly throughout.*

4 Knead *the dough on a lightly floured surface, folding it over on itself toward you, pushing away with the palms. Turn and repeat the kneading.*

Do

- Use your microwave to rise bread but make sure the dough does not start to cook — use 10% (Warm) and microwave in bursts of 4 minutes only.
- Make improvised ring dishes for bread-making by standing a heatproof glass open end up in a round dish.
- Use the microwave to refresh bread — cut it in slices and wrap it in absorbent paper, then microwave at 100% (High) for 5-10 seconds — any longer and the bread will become hard and dry.



8 Form *the dough into a smooth ball and place it in a greased bowl or large jug. Turn the dough to grease it on all sides — this stops a crust from forming during rising and keeps the outside stretchy and workable.*

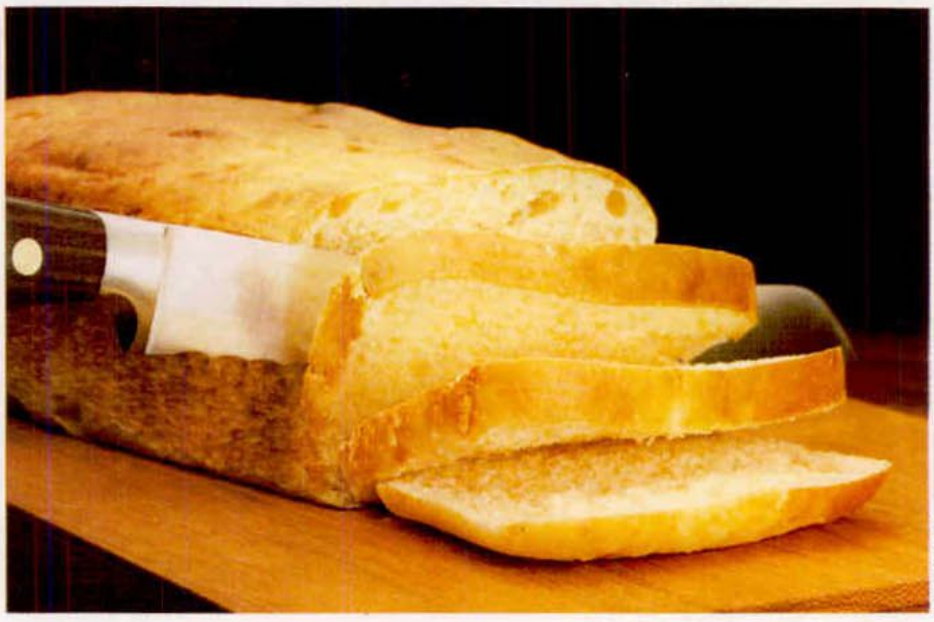
9 Cover *the dough and leave to rise in a warm place for 1-1½ hours (or rise in the microwave, see page 312). The surface will look stretched and bubbly and, on average, the dough should have doubled in volume.*

Don't

- Overgrease the baking dish or line it with cling film when microwaving bread, or the outside of the bread will be damp and soggy after microwaving.
- Overcook microwaved breads — test them with your finger to see if they spring back: at this stage they are cooked.
- Be tempted to raise the power to speed up rising or proving the dough in the microwave. Allow the dough to rest for 15 minutes before repeating the 4 minute microwave burst.

Microtips

Although microwaving will produce light loaves with a delicious, fresh-baked texture, they will not have a crisp golden crust even if topped with the oats or seeds that are recommended. For crusty rolls or small loaves, heat the grill and quickly crisp the top of the rolls, watching all the time to see that they don't burn. For large loaves, heat the conventional oven and crisp the crusts for 2-4 minutes until browned and firm, still taking care not to over-cook.



RAY DUNS

Basic rich bread

How to rise dough in the microwave

1 Place *the dough in a greased bowl large enough to hold double the volume when risen. Turn the dough to coat all over in the oil or fat to prevent a crust from forming and to allow the dough to stretch and expand.*

2 Set *the bowl in a dish of hot water and cover loosely with non-stick paper. If the dough will touch the paper when doubled in volume, dust the surface of the dough lightly with flour so that it will not stick to the paper as it rises.*

3 Microwave *the dough at 10% (Warm) for just 4 minutes (or 2 minutes for rolls). Leave to stand for 15 minutes. This low power and long standing are essential if the dough is not to start to cook before it is risen.*

4 Check *the dough — if the surface appears to be drying, turn it over carefully in the dish. Repeat the microwaving, standing and turning process until the dough has doubled in volume.*

5 Punch *down the dough and shape it according to the requirements of the recipe, then allow it to rise again (prove), either at room temperature or by microwave (see steps below) and the same procedure.*

Cook's notes

Microwaving times for breads do not vary a great deal from one wattage of machine to another. The minimum to maximum times will be correct for machines of 700 to 600 watts respectively. On a 500 watt machine, allow 8-10 minutes at 100% (High) for the second stage of microwaving.

Microwave rising and proving need very low temperatures, so you need a machine with variable power. If you do not have one, rise and prove the dough in a warm place.

How to prove shaped dough in the microwave

1 Place *the shaped dough in the microwaving dish (if it is to be cooked conventionally, the dish must be ovenproof). Grease dishes only very lightly, or the loaves will be 'damped'.*

2 Stand *the dish in a container of hot water. Dust the surface of the shaped loaf lightly with flour and cover loosely with non-stick paper while proving in the microwave.*

3 Microwave *the dough at 10% (Low) for 4 minutes (2 minutes for rolls). Stand for 15 minutes, then repeat until doubled in size. Remove the dish of water before cooking.*

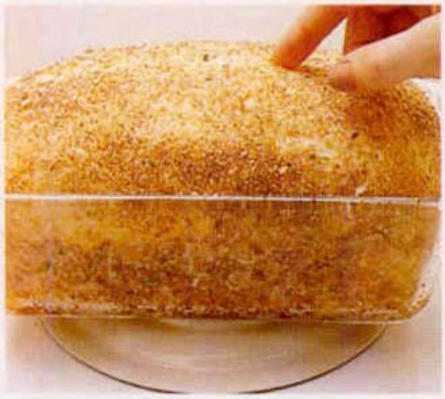
How to microwave basic rich bread

1 Grease *or butter the loaf dish lightly (if the bread is coated in crumbs and is to be cooked in a shallow dish or plate, these need not be greased at all).*

2 Place *the dish on an inverted plate or saucer in the microwave cooker so that the microwaves are more evenly distributed and the bread cooks through more efficiently.*

3 Microwave *whole loaves at 50% (Medium) for 6 minutes, then at 100% (High) for 3-6 minutes. The same applies for a shorter time for small loaves or rolls (see recipe).*

4 Turn *large loaves around during microwaving at 2-3 minute intervals to ensure even cooking. This is especially important for oblong or square dishes.*



5 Test *the bread by pressing it in several places. When it is cooked, it will spring back when touched. Do not overcook, or the bread will be tough.*

6 Leave *the loaf to stand in the dish for about 2 minutes to finish cooking. Loosen the sides and turn out onto a wire rack to cool.*

White bread rolls

6¼ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

5ml / 1tsp sugar
150ml / ¼pt warm water
5ml / 1tsp dried yeast
25g / 1oz butter
225g / 8oz strong white flour
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
skimmed milk for brushing
poppy seeds or sesame seeds for coating

MAKES 8 ROLLS

1 Combine the sugar, warm water and yeast in a jug and leave to stand until frothy.

2 Place the butter in a small bowl, cover with cling film and microwave at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds until melted.

3 Place the flour in a bowl with the salt. Make a well in the centre and pour in the yeast and butter. Mix well to form a firm dough. Knead for about 5-10 minutes on a lightly floured surface until smooth.

4 Place the dough in a greased bowl, turning it to coat all sides with the oil or fat. Cover with a tea cloth or cling film and leave to stand for 45 minutes-1 hour in a warm place until doubled in size or rise by microwave.

5 Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead well. Return the dough to the bowl, cover and leave to rest for 5 minutes before shaping.

6 Form the dough into 8 rolls, making them into knots, twists or round balls. Lightly grease a sheet of non-stick paper on the floor of the cooker, then arrange the rolls on it in a circle. Brush with skimmed milk and sprinkle the tops with poppy or sesame seeds.

7 Leave the rolls to rise for 20-30 minutes or prove by microwave. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 3 minutes, then increase the power to 100% (High) and microwave for 3-4 minutes until firm and springy.

8 Leave the rolls to stand for 5 minutes, then cool on a rack.

Four grain bread

9 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

Make the loaf in a 22 × 12cm / 8½ × 4½in loaf dish if wished.

225g / 8oz wholemeal flour
45ml / 3tbls rye flour
45ml / 3tbls rolled oats
45ml / 3tbls cornmeal
30ml / 2tbls golden syrup
15ml / 1tbls vegetable oil
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
225ml / 8fl oz boiling water
5ml / 1tsp dried yeast
60ml / 4tbls warm water
5ml / 1tsp sugar
115g / 4½oz strong plain flour
skimmed milk, to brush
45ml / 3tbls oatmeal, to coat

MAKES A 23cm / 9in RING LOAF

1 Combine the wholemeal and rye flour, rolled oats, cornmeal, syrup, oil, salt, and boiling water.
2 Sprinkle the yeast over the warm water, add the sugar and stir to dissolve. Stand for 15 minutes, then stir into the flour mixture.
3 Gradually mix in the plain flour, to make a stiff dough.
4 Turn out the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth. Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl and cover.
5 Rise in a warm place for 45-60 minutes, until doubled in size, or rise by microwave (see page 312).
6 Punch the dough down and knead lightly. Return to the bowl and leave to rest for 15 minutes.
7 Lightly grease a 23cm / 9in pie plate. Shape the dough into a 45.5cm / 18in roll, brush with milk and coat with the oatmeal.
8 Sprinkle remaining coating into dish. Shape the dough into a circle, coated side up, in the dish.
9 Place a lightly greased glass, open end up, in the centre. Cover and leave to rise in a warm place for 45-75 minutes, or prove by microwave (see page 312).
10 Uncover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 6 minutes, turning halfway through. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-7 minutes until springy, turning twice. Remove glass. Stand in dish 10 minutes.

Oatmeal wheat bread

11 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

100g / 4oz wholemeal flour
45ml / 3tbls rolled oats
45ml / 3tbls black treacle
45ml / 3tbls lard
175ml / 6fl oz water
5ml / 1tsp dried yeast
45ml / 3tbls warm water
5ml / 1tsp sugar
5ml / 1tsp salt
225g / 8oz strong white flour
cornmeal for coating
milk for brushing
rolled oats, to coat

MAKES A 25cm / 10in RING LOAF

1 Combine the wholemeal flour, oats, treacle and lard in a bowl.
2 Microwave the water at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes to boil, stir into the flour, then cool.
3 Sprinkle the yeast over the warm water, add the sugar, mix and leave to stand until frothy. Stir into the mixture with the salt.
4 Stir in the flour gradually to make a very stiff dough.
5 Knead on a well floured surface for about 5 minutes until smooth. Place in a lightly greased bowl, turning it to grease the surface of the dough, then cover.
6 Leave to rise in a warm place for about 1 hour, until light and doubled in size, or rise in the microwave (see page 312).
7 Punch down the dough, shape into a ball then leave to rest in a warm place for 15 minutes.
8 Lightly grease a 25cm / 10in pie plate and sprinkle with cornmeal. Shape the dough into a 38cm / 15in roll, brush with milk and coat with oats. Shape into a ring in the dish. Grease a glass and place, open end up in the dish.
9 Leave covered in a warm place for 45-60 minutes until risen, or prove in the microwave.
10 Sprinkle with cornmeal, then microwave at 50% (Medium) for 6 minutes, then at 100% (High) for 4-6 minutes until springy.
11 Leave to stand for 10 minutes in the dish, then cool on a rack.

Oatmeal Wheat Bread

Lamb chops

Microwave lamb chops in a browning dish for an extra speedy supper that will look and taste good. Or combine them with traditional mint sauce or a savoury stuffing for a variety of microwave meals.

Lamb chops can be quickly and successfully cooked in the microwave. For a speedy family supper for two or four people, just pop the lamb chops onto a preheated browning dish and they will be cooked in a maximum of 10 minutes, and will look and taste most appetizing.

The chart (see page 316) gives timings for cooking loin and chump chops, lamb steaks and best end of neck cutlets. Flexibility of final timings is given to allow for personal taste, depending on whether you like chops rare, medium or well done.

Weight and thickness of chops are given in the chart, but they can vary greatly; the size of individual best end of neck cutlets, for instance, will depend on the size of the back bone.

Microwave lamb chops with herbs and other flavourings to make a rich variety of meals. Cook at 50% (Medium) for meltingly tender meat.

Orange-glazed Lamb Chops

DAVE KING

Microwave times for lamb chops in a browning dish

TYPE AND THICKNESS	QUANTITY	WEIGHT PER CHOP	MICROWAVE COOKING TIME AT 100% (HIGH)	FIRST SIDE	SECOND SIDE
Loin 2-2.5cm / ¾-1in	2 4	100-175g / 4-6oz 100-175g / 4-6oz	6-7 mins 8–9 mins	3 mins 3 mins	3-4 mins 5-6 mins
Chump 2-2.5cm / ¾-1in	2 4	100-175g / 4-6oz 100-175g / 4-6oz	6-8 mins 8–10 mins	3 mins 4 mins	3-5 mins 4-6 mins
Lamb steaks 12mm-2cm / ½-¾in	2 4	100-175g / 4-6oz 100-175g / 4-6oz	5½-6½ mins 6½–8 mins	3 mins 3 mins	2½-3½ mins 3½-5 mins
Best end of neck cutlets * about 12mm-2cm / ½-¾in	2 4	50-75g / 2-3oz 50-75g / 2-3oz	3½-5 mins 5–6 mins	2 mins 2 mins	1½-3 mins 3-4 mins

* Chops in Australia and New Zealand

How to microwave lamb chops

Preheat *a browning dish at 100% (High) for 5 minutes or according to the manufacturer's instructions.*

Place *the chops in the dish, pressing down well. Microwave the first side, uncovered, following chart times.*

Turn *the chops and cook, uncovered, following the chart times for the second side. Leave to stand for 3-5 minutes.*

Orange-glazed lamb chops

23½ mins

Standing time: 3-5 mins

4 loin lamb chops, 2.5cm / 1in thick
5ml / 1tsp cornflour

GLAZE
75g / 3oz marmalade
45ml / 3tbls clear honey
15ml / 1tbls made English mustard
10ml / 2tsp lemon juice
5ml / 1tsp Worcestershire sauce

SERVES 4

1 Combine glaze ingredients in a 1.1L / 2pt casserole. Microwave at 100% (High) for 30-45 seconds until marmalade has melted. Stir.
2 Arrange the chops on a roasting rack with the meatiest portions to the outside.
3 Spoon half of the glaze over the chops. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 6 minutes.
4 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for a further 5 minutes. Turn the chops over and rearrange. Spoon the remaining glaze over the chops.
5 Re-cover and microwave for 10-15 minutes at 50% (Medium), until chops are cooked to your liking.
6 Remove the chops, cover and stand for 3-5 minutes. Stir the cornflour into the juices and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes. Spoon over chops.

Lamb amandine

24 mins

Standing time: 5-6½ mins

10ml / 2tsp plain flour
10ml / 2tsp dried parsley
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
generous sprinkling of pepper
90ml / 6tbls sherry
2 lamb leg chops, about 225g / 8oz each, 12mm / ½in thick
30ml / 2tbls flaked almonds
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
60ml / 4tbls soured cream

SERVES 2

1 In a small shallow casserole mix together the flour, parsley, salt, pepper and sherry until they form a smooth paste.
2 Place the chops in the casserole and turn several times to coat in the sherry mixture.
3 Cover the casserole and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 20-25 minutes or until tender. Turn the chops over and rotate the dish 2-3 times. Remove chops, cover and stand for 5-6½ minutes.
4 Meanwhile, place the almonds and butter in a small dish. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes or until light brown. Stir the almonds every minute.
5 Stir the almonds and soured cream into the casserole. Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 2-3½ minutes or until hot. Stir well before pouring over the meat and serving.

VARIATION
To make a single serving of Lamb Amandine simply halve all the ingredients. Prepare as above, then microwave the lamb chop at 50% (Medium) for 11-15 minutes or until tender. Microwave the almonds for the same length of time but reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and cook the sauce for only 1-2 minutes.

Minty lamb chops

15 mins

Standing time: 3-5 mins

4 loin lamb chops, about 2.5cm / 1in thick

MINT SAUCE
150ml / ¼pt water
7.5ml / 1½tsp red wine vinegar
10ml / 2tsp malt vinegar
60ml / 4tbls fresh chopped mint
7.5ml / 1½tsp sugar
salt (optional)

SERVES 4

1 Combine all the ingredients for the mint sauce in a 1.1L / 2pt bowl.
2 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes or until boiling.
3 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 5 minutes.
4 Preheat a browning dish and add the chops, pressing down well. Cook, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.
5 Turn the chops over and rearrange; spoon 5ml / 1tsp mint sauce over each chop. Microwave for another 5-6 minutes. Cover and leave to stand for 3-5 minutes.
6 Transfer remaining sauce to a sauce boat and serve. Store left-over sauce in the refrigerator.

Left: *Lamb Amandine*
Below: *Minty Lamb Chops*

Lamb steaks with onions

16¼ min

Standing time: 3-5 mins

25g / 1oz butter or margarine
10ml / 2tsp chopped parsley
5ml / 1tsp dried marjarom
5ml / 1tsp dried rosemary
salt
4 lamb leg chops, total weight about 700-900g / 1½-2lb
2 onions, sliced into thin rings

SERVES 4

1 Melt the butter in a large, covered casserole at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds.
2 Stir in the herbs and salt.
3 Add the chops, turning to coat with the seasoned butter.
4 Sprinkle the onions over, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 11-16 minutes. Turn steaks over and rearrange halfway through cooking. Stand, loosely covered, for 3-5 minutes.

Mushroom lamb chops

14¼ mins

Standing time: 3-5 mins

25g / 1oz butter or margarine
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
5ml / 1tsp ground ginger
salt and pepper
good pinch garlic powder
5ml / 1tsp soy sauce
8 loin lamb chops, 12mm-2.5cm / ½-1in thick
225g / 8oz button mushrooms, sliced

SERVES 4

1 Melt the butter in a large, shallow, covered casserole at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds.
2 Stir in the flour, seasonings and soy sauce. Mix until smooth.
3 Arrange the chops in the casserole with the meaty portions to the outside of the dish.
4 Add the mushrooms, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Reduce to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 9-14 minutes. Halfway through, remove chops and stir sauce. Replace chops and turn. Cook for remaining time. Stand for 3-5 minutes, serve with the sauce.

Bacon-wrapped Chops

Bacon-wrapped chops

9¾ mins

Standing time: 3-5 mins

15g / ½oz butter or margarine
100g / 4oz canned sliced mushrooms, drained, chopped
60ml / 4tbls fresh breadcrumbs
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried parsley
good pinch of salt
1.5ml / ¼tsp dried marjoram
1.5ml / ¼tsp garlic powder
4 loin lamb chops, 12mm-2.5cm / ½-1in thick
4 bacon rashers

SERVES 2

1 Melt the butter in a covered bowl at 100% (High) for 10-15 seconds. Stir in the mushrooms, breadcrumbs, parsley, salt, marjoram and garlic powder.
2 Make a slit in the meaty side of each chop and stuff each with one-quarter of the mushroom mixture. Press in firmly, then secure with wooden cocktail sticks.
3 Place bacon on absorbent paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 2½-3 minutes, until cooked but not crisp.
4 Wrap one bacon slice around meaty portion of each chop and secure with a cocktail stick.
5 Arrange the chops on a roasting rack, meaty portions to the outside. Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 7-10 minutes. Turn chops over halfway through cooking. Stand the chops, covered, for 3-5 minutes before serving.

DON LAST

Strawberries

Discover how well strawberries cook in the microwave. Enjoy making fresh fruity soufflés, jams and syrups — they are so much quicker and easier to prepare.

Make the most of strawberries while they are in season. All their fresh, tangy flavour is retained during cooking in the microwave, and the colour becomes even more vivid.

Select strawberries that are clean and bright red with few green or white spots, use within 2-3 days of purchase. Strawberries that are not in perfect condition are excellent for jam or syrup (see pages 320 and 321).

Strawberry Soufflés

PAUL WEBSTER

Strawberry soufflés

20 secs

Standing time: none

350g / 12oz strawberries, hulled
juice of 1 orange
15g / ½oz envelope powdered gelatine
45ml / 2tbls cold water
30-60ml / 2-4tbls caster sugar
150ml / ¼pt natural yoghurt
2 egg whites
few strawberries and 150ml / ¼pt whipped cream, to decorate

SERVES 6

1 Purée the strawberries and orange juice in a blender.
2 Sprinkle the gelatine over the water in a cup; soak for 5 minutes. Microwave at 100% (High) for 20-30 seconds until dissolved.
3 Leave to cool slightly; stir into the purée. Add sugar to taste. Stir in the yoghurt and chill.
4 Whisk the egg whites until stiff, then fold into the soufflé.
5 Tie greaseproof paper collars around 6 individual dishes and spoon in the mixture. Chill for 2 hours. Decorate with the strawberries and cream.

Strawberry jam

24 mins

Standing time: none

700g / 1½lb strawberries, hulled and sliced
45ml / 3tbls lemon juice
700g / 1½lb sugar

MAKES 2 × 450g / 1lb JARS

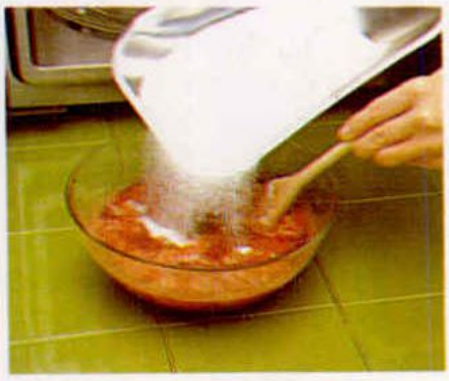
Cook's notes

To test whether jam has set, spoon out a little onto the edge of a cold saucer. Allow to cool, then push the surface with your finger. It should wrinkle if the setting point has been reached. If it does not, microwave at 100% (High) for a further 2 minutes and test again. Repeat as necessary until wrinkling of the jam surface occurs.

DON LAST

How to microwave Strawberry jam

Combine *the strawberries and lemon juice in a large bowl. Microwave, at 100% (High) for 6-10 minutes, until at a full rolling boil; stir once.*



Mix *in the sugar. Microwave at 100% (High) for 8 minutes or until at a full rolling boil; stir after 3 minutes then every 2 minutes.*

Boil *for 10-12 minutes, or until the setting point is reached (see Cook's notes). Cool 5 minutes; remove scum.*

RAY DUNS

Pour *into hot, sterilized jars, seal and cover. Leave to cool before storing in a cool, dark place.*

Strawberry syrup

8 mins

Standing time: none

225g / 8oz fresh strawberries, hulled
225g / 8oz sugar
175ml / 6fl oz golden syrup

MAKES 450ml / 16fl oz

1 Cut the strawberries in half. Place in a large bowl. Mash with a fork, then cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes.
2 Line a sieve or strainer with a double layer of muslin and place over a 2.8L / 5pt bowl. Pour the hot fruit into the lined sieve and press with the back of a spoon to extract all the juices (about 150-200ml / 5-7fl oz). Discard the strawberry pulp.
3 Add the sugar and golden syrup. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-6 minutes until boiling; stir every 2 minutes. Boil 1 minute.
3 Skim any foam from the surface. Pour into hot, sterilized 450ml / 16fl oz jars and cover. Store in the refrigerator or cool, dark place up to 3 months. Serve over pancakes, waffles, ice cream and steamed puddings.

TO SERVE
Remove the jar lid. Microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds until the jar is warm to touch.

Danish fruity cheese

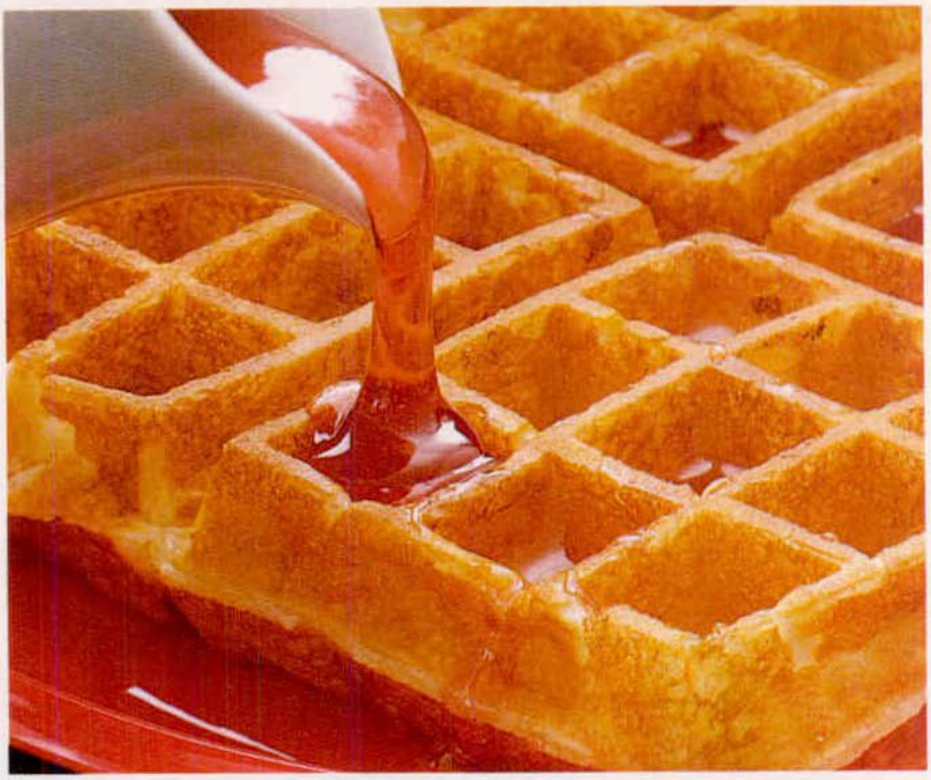
6 mins

Standing time: none

2 eggs, slightly beaten
30ml / 2tbls milk
1.5ml / ¼tsp vanilla flavouring
2.5ml / ½tsp ground cinnamon
4 small slices firm white bread
15g / ½oz unsalted butter
225g / 8oz cottage cheese
175g / 6oz fresh strawberries, sliced

SERVES 4

1 In a shallow bowl, blend the eggs, milk, vanilla and half the cinnamon. Soak the bread in the egg mixture, then place on a piece of greaseproof paper.
2 Preheat a browning dish at 100% (High) for 5 minutes or according to manufacturer's instructions. Immediately add the butter and then the bread slices. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute. Turn over the slices. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4-6 minutes, or until the bread is dry to the touch.
3 Blend the remaining cinnamon with the cottage cheese. Spread one-quarter of the cottage cheese on each bread slice. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute to melt the cheese. Top each with one-quarter of the sliced strawberries.



Above: *Strawberry Syrup;*
Below: *Danish Fruity Cheese*

Children's birthday party

Little ones will love this array of fun party food — and as a group of boisterous four-to-six year olds needs plenty of supervision, the microwave will allow you the extra time and energy you need.

Children love novelty food — plenty of colours and shapes and different flavours to enjoy, and there should be something to please the most finicky of tiny tastes here.

No children's party is complete without jelly, and these traffic lights make a colourful variation on a favourite theme of jelly and cream. There is a choice of sandwiches; choose two out of the three to make enough for eight children. Serve Home-Made Lemonade (see page 89) to drink.

Using the microwave to prepare most of the food in advance, you should find that you have time on your hands — devote your attention to your small guests; you will find yourself enjoying the party as much as they do — after all, it's kids' stuff using your microwave!

Bacon peanut sandwiches

3 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

200g / 7oz streaky bacon slices, rinds removed
30ml / 2tbls peanut butter
100g / 4oz cream cheese
12 slices wholemeal bread

MAKES 6 ROUNDS

1 Put the bacon on three layers of absorbent paper; cover with another and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes. Leave to stand for 5 minutes, then chop finely.

2 Beat the peanut butter with the cream cheese and bacon. Use to make sandwiches with the bread. Trim crusts; cut into triangles.

MENU

Bacon-wrapped Frankfurters
Served with ketchup or relish

Sandwiches
With a choice of delicious fillings

Gingerbread Men
Crisp biscuits with piped icing

Hickory Dickory Dock Cake
Light sponge with a nursery rhyme theme

Traffic Light Jellies
Three-colour jellies with cream

SERVES 8

Countdown

The day before
Microwave the gingerbread men, allow to cool, then store in an airtight container. Make the sponge base for the Hickory Dickory Dock cake. Allow the cake to cool, then wrap in foil or cling film to store overnight. Microwave the lemonade, cover and refrigerate. Choose two of the sandwich fillings, prepare, then refrigerate in sealed pots.

Early on the day
Prepare the icing for the cake. Assemble the cake according to steps as shown. Microwave the jelly traffic lights, assemble and leave to set completely in the refrigerator. Wrap the frankfurters in bacon and refrigerate until an hour before they are needed. Assemble the sandwiches of your choice and cover with cling film to keep them fresh.

During the party
Microwave the frankfurters. Serve the Home-Made Lemonade diluted with water.

DON LAST

Tuna cucumber sandwiches

5 secs

Standing time: none

198g / 7oz tuna in brine, drained
30ml / 2tbls mayonnaise
salt and pepper
75g / 3oz butter
12 slices wholemeal bread
½ cucumber, thinly sliced

MAKES 6 ROUNDS

1 Mix the tuna with the mayonnaise, salt and pepper, beating until smooth. (Do not overseason — children usually prefer blander flavours.)
2 Soften the butter by microwaving at 30% (Low) for 5-10 seconds, and use to butter the bread. (This is particularly useful if the butter is taken straight from the refrigerator, and would otherwise be too hard to spread).
3 Divide the filling mixture between six buttered slices, cover with slices of cucumber then top with the remaining slices of bread pressing together.
4 Trim off the crusts and cut into squares.

Chicken and ham sandwiches

5 secs

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz cooked chicken, finely minced
100g / 4oz cooked ham, finely minced
45ml / 3tbls mayonnaise
salt and pepper
75g / 3oz butter
12 slices wholemeal bread

MAKES 48 PINWHEELS

1 Mix together the chicken, ham, mayonnaise and seasoning to taste. Set aside in a cool place.
2 Soften the butter by microwaving at 30% (Low) for 5-10 seconds until easy to spread.
3 Roll the bread with a rolling pin, to make it easier to roll up, then butter. Cut the crusts off, spread the filling over all the slices. Roll up each slice like a Swiss roll and cut each slice into 4 pinwheels.

Frankfurters in bacon

12 mins

Standing time: none

16 slices of streaky bacon, rinds removed
8 frankfurters (about 225g / 8oz)

SERVES 8

1 Arrange half the bacon on a rack or absorbent paper-lined plate. Cover with absorbent paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes. Repeat with the remaining bacon.
2 Quarter each frankfurter and halve each bacon rasher. Wrap a piece of bacon round each frankfurter. Secure with cocktail sticks.
3 Arrange half the rolls between pieces of absorbent paper, and microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes until the bacon is brown. Repeat with remaining frankfurter rolls. Push the cocktail sticks into a grapefruit.

Traffic light jellies

1½ mins

Standing time: none

1 packet lime jelly
1 packet orange jelly
1 packet raspberry jelly
150ml / ¼pt thick cream, whipped
jelly diamonds to decorate

MAKES 8

1 Break the jelly into cubes, keeping the flavours separate.
2 Place the lime jelly in a measuring jug or bowl. Microwave at 100% (High) for 30 seconds, then make up the volume to 575ml / 1pt with cold water. Stir the mixture thoroughly, then divide between 8 small straight glasses. Put into the refrigerator to set.
3 Repeat the procedure with the orange jelly, pour it over the set lime jelly and refrigerate.
4 Use the raspberry jelly in the same way. When set, pipe whipped cream on each jelly and decorate with jelly diamonds.

Traffic Light Jellies and Gingerbread Men.

DON LAST

Microtips

When making the Traffic Light Jellies, do not allow the layers to set too hard between additions, or the finished jelly will split. To set together well, each layer of jelly should be set but sticky when the next is added. If the layers of jelly set too quickly, microwave at 100% (High) for a few seconds to soften a little.

Gingerbread men

5 mins

Standing time: 15 mins

It is essential when measuring the treacle that the tablespoons are level, as too great a quantity will affect the balance of ingredients.

225g / 8oz plain flour
5ml / 1tsp bicarbonate of soda
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt
5ml / 1tsp ground ginger
2.5ml / ½tsp ground cinnamon
50g / 2oz butter
100g / 4oz light soft brown sugar
60ml / 4tbls black treacle
15ml / 1tbls milk

MAKES 10

1 Sift the flour with the bicarbonate of soda, salt, ginger and cinnamon into a large bowl.
2 Place all the remaining ingredients in a bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for 1 minute until melted. Stir well, then cool.
3 Pour the cooled liquid into the dry ingredients, then knead to a stiff dough on a lightly floured surface. Wrap the dough in cling film. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.
4 Roll out the dough to a rectangle 25 × 30cm / 10 × 12in. Cut out 10 figures using a cutter, re-rolling the dough if necessary.
5 Place 4 shapes on absorbent paper on a large dish. Stand on an inverted saucer, then microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes. Allow to stand for 5 minutes.
6 Repeat the procedure with the remaining 6, halving the time if cooking only 2 at a time. Cool on a rack, then peel off paper.

Hickory dickory dock cake

28¼ mins

Standing time: 15 mins

350g / 12oz butter
350g / 12oz caster sugar
6 eggs
350g / 12oz self-raising flour
5ml / 1tsp baking powder
pinch of salt
45ml / 3tbls milk

BUTTER CREAM
175g / 6oz sugar
125ml / 4fl oz water
4 egg yolks
350g / 12oz butter

DECORATION
5ml / 1tsp cocoa powder, sifted
100g / 4oz icing sugar
jelly diamonds
1 chocolate mouse

MAKES 20 SLICES

1 Line a 22 × 12cm / 8½ × 4½in loaf dish with greased greaseproof paper.
2 Cream the butter and sugar together then beat in the eggs. Sift the dry ingredients, then fold into the mixture with the milk.
3 Spoon one-third of the mixture into the prepared dish. Place absorbent paper on top and microwave at 100% (High) for 6-7 minutes, until springy to the touch, or a cocktail stick comes out clean from the centre.
4 Leave the cake to stand in the dish for 5 minutes, then remove and cool on a wire rack. Repeat the procedure with the rest of the mixture to make two more cakes.
5 To make the butter cream, place the sugar and water in a heatproof bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Stir well until the sugar has dissolved. Continue to microwave for a further 7-8 minutes until the mixture is syrupy and will form a thread between two spoons.
6 Beat the yolks in a bowl, whisk in the boiling syrup in a steady stream and whisk until thick and mousse-like. Allow to cool.
7 Soften the butter if necessary by microwaving at 30% (Low) for 15-20 seconds. Gradually add the sugar mixture, beating until smooth. Colour according to taste, then set aside, covered with cling film until it is to be used.

How to assemble Hickory Dickory Dock Cake

Trim *two cakes to make an 18cm / 7in square. Trim off the corners and use with the third cake to make the base. Stick the pieces together, using some of the butter cream.*

Colour *30ml / 2tbls butter cream with the cocoa; set aside. Add water to the icing sugar to make a thick flowing icing and pour into a 10cm / 4in ring cutter to make a clock face on the cake.*

Remove *ring cutter when icing is set, then spread all but 150ml / ¼pt of the butter cream over the whole cake, smoothing it over to conceal the joins in the cake.*

Put *the chocolate icing in a piping bag with a small writing nozzle and pipe on the features as shown above. Fill a piping bag fitted with a small star nozzle with remaining butter cream.*

Pipe *shells at the base and sides of the clock face and pipe a fleur de lys at the top and base of the clock. Pipe a star as a handle for the door as shown above.*

Pipe *a border of shells above the clock face and around the base of the cake. Decorate with jelly diamonds as shown. Insert 4 candles in holders into the cake. Add the chocolate mouse.*

RAY DUNS

Stuffed vegetables

Cooking stuffed vegetables in the microwave retains all their flavour and moisture. Freeze them and you have stand-by meals which can be thawed and microwaved in minutes.

For a hearty meal, when family or unexpected guests need to be fed, frozen stuffed vegetables are the perfect stand-by.

When stuffing tender vegetables such as courgettes, it is best to cook the dish before freezing. Less tender vegetables such as aubergines take longer to thaw so turn out better if they are frozen uncooked. The vegetable then does not become tough from over-cooking. Vegetables that have not been blanched before freezing should not be frozen for too long.

Stuffed Courgettes

Stuffed courgettes

30 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

To eat these courgettes immediately after assembling, heat at 100% (High) for 5 minutes.

4 courgettes
¼ green pepper, chopped
1 celery stalk, chopped
½ onion, chopped
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
225g / 8oz long grain rice
1 container frozen Tomato Sauce, thawed (see page 328), or 225g / 8oz bottled tomato and onion sauce
200ml / 7fl oz water
15ml / 1tbls chopped parsley
2.5ml / ½tsp chilli powder
salt and pepper
2.5ml / ½tsp Worcestershire sauce

TO SERVE
60ml / 4tbls soured cream
30ml / 2tbls chopped black olives

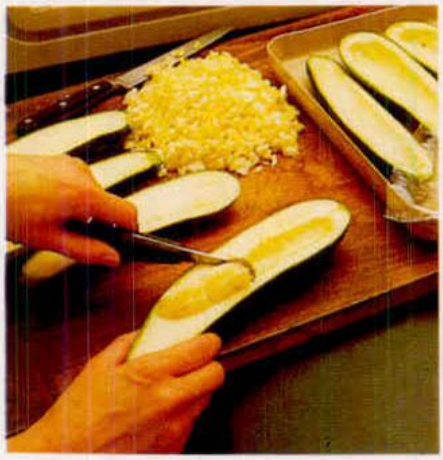
MAKES 2 × 4 SERVINGS

Cook's notes

After scooping out the pulp from the courgettes, taste a small piece. If bitter, sprinkle the inside of the shell with salt, and turn upside down on a piece of absorbent paper; allow to drain. Rinse well in cold water and dry with absorbent paper before stuffing and microwaving.

Freeze the stuffed courgettes for no longer than 1 month. The shells tend to soften on reheating if frozen too long.

How to microwave Stuffed courgettes



Halve *the courgettes lengthways. Scoop out the pulp leaving a 6mm / ¼in shell. Chop the pulp coarsely and set aside. Place the shells, cut side up, on a large plate; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes until hot.*

Combine *the chopped courgette pulp, green pepper, celery, onion and butter or margarine in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 6 minutes, or until tender, stirring after half the time.*

Stir *in the rice, tomato sauce, water, parsley, chilli powder, salt and pepper and Worcestershire sauce; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 15-17 minutes, or until the liquid is absorbed and the rice is tender.*

To freeze, *spoon the rice mixture into the courgette shells and allow to cool. Wrap the shells in 2 separate batches of 4. Label and freeze for no longer than 1 month.*

To serve, *unwrap 1 package and place the shells on a microwave roasting rack. Cover with greaseproof paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes, rearranging once.*

Leave to stand, *covered, for 5 minutes. Garnish each courgette with 15m / 1tbls soured cream and 7.5ml / 1½tsp chopped olives. Serve 4 as a starter or 2 as a lunch or supper dish.*

Tomato sauce

31 mins

Standing time: none

This sauce can be heated and served over the stuffed vegetables or used in the stuffing.

2.3L / 4pt boiling water
1.7kg / 3¾lb tomatoes
300g / 10oz tomato purée
¼ green pepper, finely chopped
½ onion, finely chopped
15ml / 1tbls vegetable oil
10ml / 2tsp sugar
5ml / 1tsp salt
2.5ml / ½tsp dried basil
1.5ml / ¼tsp pepper
1 bay leaf

MAKES 2 × 275ml / ½pt SERVINGS

1 Pour half the boiling water into a 1.7L / 3pt bowl. Pierce the skins of ½ the tomatoes with a knife and place in the boiling water. Cover with vented cling film and microwave at 100% (High) for 30 seconds, or until the skins begin to loosen. Plunge the tomatoes into cold water. Repeat with remaining water and tomatoes as necessary.
2 Remove the skins and cut the tomatoes in half. Purée the tomatoes flesh in a food processor or blender, or by mashing with a fork. Sieve to remove the seeds.
3 In a 2.5L / 4½pt casserole, combine the purée and all the remaining ingredients; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 10 minutes. Stir well.
4 Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 20-25 minutes, or until the sauce is thickened, stirring several times. Leave to cool.
5 Spoon into 2 freezer/microwave containers. Label and freeze for up to 3 months.

TO THAW
Remove the lid of 1 container and microwave at 100% (High) for 2½-3½ minutes, breaking apart and stirring every minute. Add a little water if the sauce is too thick. The sauce is then ready to use in recipes, but if serving over the stuffed vegetables, you need to microwave it a further 4-5 minutes to heat through.

RAY DUNS

Stuffed aubergines

32 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

2 aubergines
350g / 12oz minced beef
225g / 8oz can whole tomatoes, drained and chopped
30ml / 2tbls long grain rice, cooked
50g / 2oz frozen sweetcorn
30ml / 2tbls grated Parmesan cheese
½ onion, finely chopped
15ml / 1tbls red pepper or pimiento, chopped (optional)
2.5ml / ½tsp celery salt
1.5ml / ¼tsp garlic powder

TO SERVE
1 container frozen Tomato Sauce, thawed (see recipe, left), or 225g / 8oz bottled tomato and onion sauce

SERVES 4

Stuffed Aubergines

1 Halve the aubergines; scoop out the flesh, leaving 6mm / ¼in shell. Chop half the flesh, discarding the rest. Place the shells on a dish lined with greaseproof paper. Mix together all the other ingredients, except the Tomato Sauce, and combine with the aubergine flesh.
2 Spoon the stuffing mix into the aubergines. Freeze until firm. Wrap individually, label and freeze for up to 1 month.

TO SERVE
Unwrap the frozen aubergines and arrange in a 35.5cm / 14in oval baking dish or 4 single dishes; cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Reduce power to 70% (Medium-High) for 25-28 minutes, rearranging 2-3 times. Let stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Heat sauce as directed in recipe left. Serve over the aubergines.

Microwave plus grill

Take advantage of the speed and convenience of a microwave cooker to make your favourite dishes; then pop them under a hot grill for a few minutes to give them a crisp, brown finish

For speed and convenience you can start a cooking process in the microwave and then finish food under a hot grill. You have the advantage of microwave speed and the eye and texture appeal provided by conventional cooking.

There are also many dishes which, when cooked conventionally on top of the stove or in the oven, acquire a brown and crisp finish. The conventional grill can be used in conjunction with the microwave to give an attractive finish to these. You cannot 'grill' foods by microwave alone, the moist method of cooking makes this impossible.

The microwave can be the perfect cooking method for the major preparation of a dish — for the smooth custard of a Bread and Butter Pudding for instance (see recipe) — and 5-10 minutes under a hot grill at the end of cooking will give an appetizing finish.

Use the recipes and ideas in this chapter as a guideline for ways in which you can speed up your cooking time of favourite recipes and make your food look good at the same time.

Bread and Butter Pudding and Crême Brulée

DON LAST

Bread and butter pudding

17 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

This traditional English dessert is quick and clean to prepare in the microwave. It originated as a simple Tudor dish combining stale bread and dried fruit. The pudding is still an economical family dessert which can use leftover bread.

6 slices of white bread, crusts removed
50g / 2oz butter
50g / 2oz sultanas
5ml / 1tsp grated orange zest
3 eggs, beaten
30ml / 2tbls caster sugar
425ml / ¾pt milk
few drops of vanilla flavouring

SERVES 4

1 Lightly grease a 1.1L / 2pt pie dish. Spread bread slices with the butter. Cut each in quarters.
2 Layer half the bread slices evenly in the dish with half the sultanas. Sprinkle the orange zest over, then layer the rest of the bread and sultanas.
3 Beat the eggs with the sugar. Microwave the milk in a covered jug at 100% (High) for 1 minute. Add the vanilla flavouring then pour into the egg mixture, mixing well.
4 Pour the egg and milk over the bread and microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.
5 Press the bread down into the custard and leave to stand, loosely covered, for 5 minutes. Cook, uncovered, at 50% (Medium) for a further 13 minutes, or until set. Keep a close watch and remove the pudding promptly as the custard will continue to cook slightly after being removed.
6 Place the pudding under a hot grill for 3-5 minutes until golden. Serve hot or warm.

VARIATIONS
Use healthy wholemeal bread. Substitute 5ml / 1tsp grated lemon zest for the orange zest. For crunchy topping, sprinkle with 50g / 2oz demerara sugar then grill.

How to brown under the grill

Crisp *the skin of microwaved poultry pieces under the grill. If you do not have a browning dish, brown beefburgers, sausages or chops under the grill after microwaving.*

Brush *whole microwaved fish (see page 145) with a little vegetable oil and place under a hot grill for 1-2 minutes to crisp the skin if wished. In this case, omit the standing time.*

Brown *potato-or breadcrumb-topped dishes or quiches under the grill for 2-3 minutes after microwaving. Sprinkle with cheese if wished. Omit 2-3 minutes of specified standing time.*

Bread rolls *and loaves (see page 309) cooked in the microwave are very pale; to give them an attractive golden appearance, place under a hot grill for 2-3 minutes before leaving to cool.*

Brown *microwaved fruit or savoury crumbles under a hot grill for 2-3 minutes. Sprinkle with brown sugar or chopped nuts first if wished. Omit 2-3 minutes of specified standing time.*

Microwave *meringue-topped puddings such as Pineapple Lemon Pie (see page 33), then brown under a hot grill for 2-4 minutes. Watch closely to make sure meringue does not burn.*

Prawn gratin appetizer

20 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

This dish makes an elegant starter for a dinner party and is easy to cook in the microwave.

700g / 1½lb potatoes, diced
salt and pepper
50g / 2oz butter
30ml / 2tbls milk
1 onion, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
100g / 4oz mushrooms, sliced
45ml / 3tbls plain flour
150ml / ¼pt fish stock, made with a stock cube
150ml / ¼pt dry white wine
2 tomatoes, skinned and chopped
225g / 8oz cooked, peeled prawns
finely chopped parsley, to garnish

SERVES 4

1 Place the potatoes in a dish with 50ml / 2fl oz water and cover with cling film rolled back. Microwave at 100% (High) for 9 minutes.
2 Leave to stand for 5 minutes, then drain well and mash with salt and pepper to taste, 25g / 1oz butter and the milk.
3 Put the remaining butter in a bowl and add the onion and garlic. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes. Stir in mushrooms and microwave for 1 minute. Stir in the flour and microwave for 2 minutes, stirring halfway through.
4 Gradually stir in the stock and wine then microwave for 3 minutes, stirring 3 times. Stir in the tomato and prawns and microwave for 3 minutes.
5 Transfer the mashed potatoes to a piping bag fitted with a large star nozzle. Pipe a border around 4 scallop shells or small serving dishes. Spoon the prawn mixture into the centre and place the dishes under a hot grill for 5-10 minutes until the potato is golden with a crisp topping. Sprinkle with chopped parsley, to garnish.

VARIATIONS
If fresh tomatoes are not available or are expensive, use 5ml / 1tsp tomato purée instead.

RAY DUNS

Ham and potato bake

22 mins

Standing time: none

150g / 5oz pkt dried potato slices with cheese sauce
450g / 1lb canned ham, cut into 12mm / ½in cubes

SERVES 4

1 Prepare the sauce as directed on the packet and combine with the potatoes in a 25 × 20cm / 10 × 8in heatproof dish. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 10 minutes. Stir once.
2 Stir the cubed ham into the potato mixture and re-cover the dish. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 12-15 minutes until the ham is hot and the potatoes tender.
3 Preheat the grill. Uncover the ham and potato bake and place under the grill for 3-5 minutes until the top is crisp and golden.

VARIATION
Instead of cooked ham, use 225g / 8oz cooked, peeled prawns. Microwave for the same time as previously instructed.

Crême brulée

9 min

Standing time: none

275ml / 10fl oz double cream
275ml / 10fl oz single cream
15ml / 1tbls caster sugar
5ml / 1tsp vanilla flavouring
4 egg yolks, beaten
60ml / 4tbls soft brown sugar

SERVES 4-5

1 Combine the creams, caster sugar and vanilla flavouring and mix well. Pour slowly over the egg yolks and beat thoroughly.
2 Divide amongst the ramekins. Arrange in a circle and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes.
3 Rearrange the dishes and microwave for 1 minute. Rearrange, reduce to 50% (Medium) and cook for 6-8 minutes. Remove each crême brulée when an inserted knife comes out clean.
4 Cool and chill for at least 3 hours. Sprinkle the sugar equally over the tops of the crêmes.
6 Put the ramekins under a hot grill, 5-7cm / 2-3in from the heat for 2-3 minutes, or until the sugar caramelizes. Cool and chill.

Canny seafood

Keep a selection of canned seafood in the storecupboard and you've the basis of many deliciously quick microwave meals to suit any occasion.

Canned fish is nutritious, easy to use and ideal for making lots of interesting meals at short notice — substantial enough to please the family, yet also delicate and decorative enough for special occasion dishes.

Salmon, tuna and prawns are three of the most popular types of canned fish. Salmon comes in a variety of grades and prices: red salmon has the most flavour and is the most expensive, and pink salmon is the cheapest. Save the red salmon for cold dishes, such as mousses and salads and use the cheaper pink type for cooked dishes.

Tuna is available in oil or brine — the tunas in brine are ideal for slimmers because of their lower calorie content.

Prawns (and shrimps) are usually canned in natural juices and are also low in calories. Apart from adding flavour to dishes, prawns are also invaluable for giving a decorative garnish to party dishes. Mixed with a few other colourful ingredients such as red and green peppers or sweetcorn, spring onions, olives, tomatoes and radishes, they turn any dish into a festive affair.

Tuna and Prawn Casserole

DON LAST

Tuna and prawn casserole

10¼ mins

Standing time: none

25g / 1oz butter or margarine
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
1.5ml / ¼tsp mustard powder
salt and pepper
250ml / 9fl oz milk
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, grated
190g / 6½oz can tuna, flaked
90g / 3½oz can prawns, drained
175g / 6oz mushrooms, sliced
1 celery stalk, thinly sliced
1 small onion, chopped
½ green pepper, cut in thin strips
85g / 3oz can chow mein noodles, or potato sticks

SERVES 4

1 Place the butter in an 850ml / 1½pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds until melted. Stir in flour and seasonings, then blend in the milk. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes, or until thickened, whisking well halfway through and at the end of cooking. Stir in the cheese until melted, then add the drained tuna, prawns and mushrooms.
2 Place the celery, onion and green pepper in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes or until softened, stirring every minute. Stir in the cheese sauce mixture and microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 3 minutes.
3 Stir in two-thirds of the noodles and sprinkle the remainder on top. Serve hot with Butter-glazed mange tout (see below), if liked.

Microtips

To microwave Butter-glazed mange tout: place 450g / 1lb mange tout (washed and drained), in a large bowl with 25g / 1oz butter. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-5 minutes until tender but still crisp, stirring once during cooking. Season to taste with salt and pepper, toss well together to coat in the butter.

Tuna medley

7¾ mins

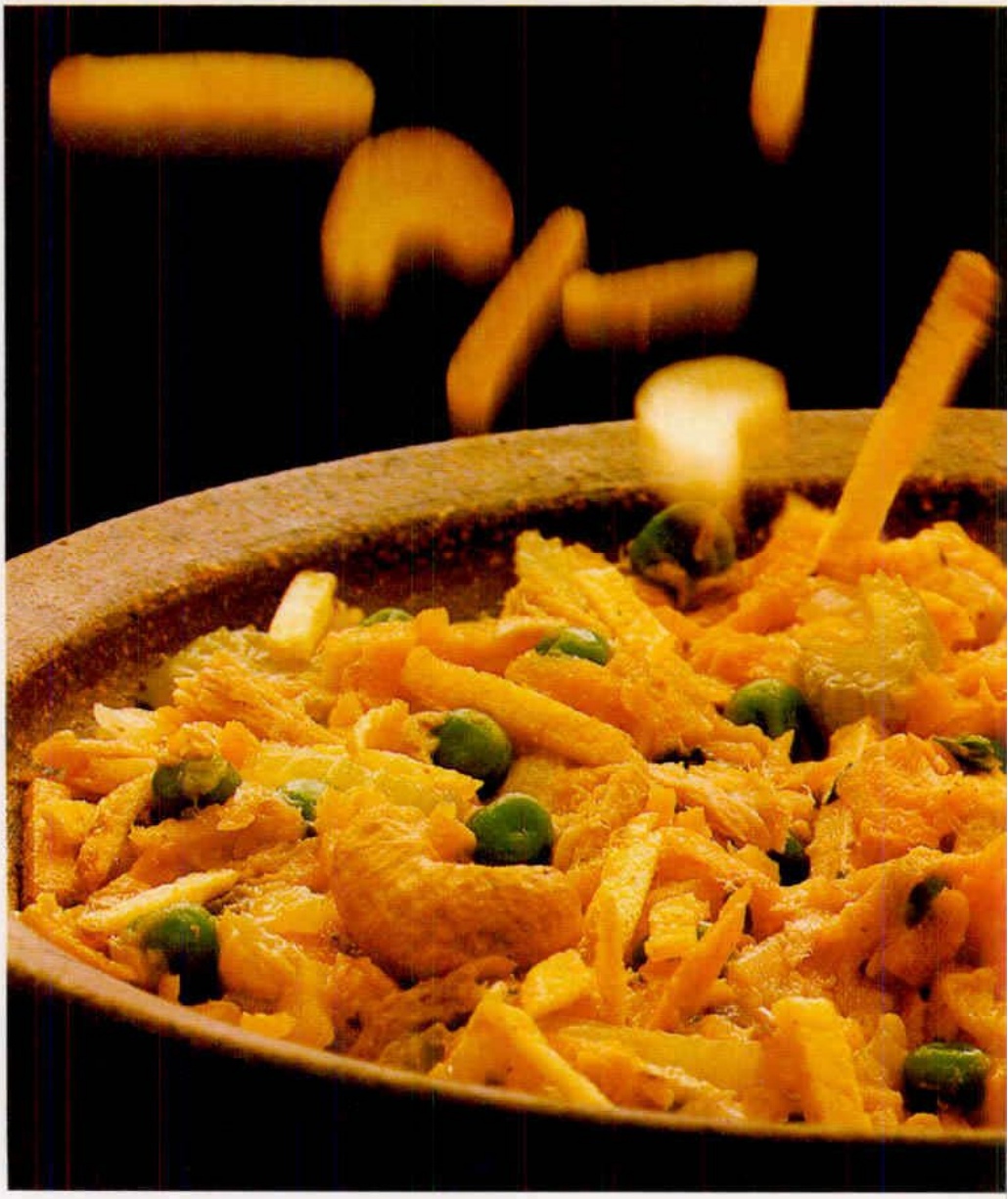
Standing time: none

100g / 4oz carrots, grated
2 celery stalks, sliced
1 onion, chopped
295g / 10.4 can cream mushroom soup
190 / 6½oz can tuna, drained and flaked
150g / 5oz frozen peas
5ml / 1tsp soy sauce
5ml / 1tsp dried parsley
1.5ml / ¼tsp garlic powder
75g / 3oz salted potato sticks
50g / 2oz cashew nuts

SERVES 4

1 Combine the carrots, celery and onion in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until tender but crisp.
2 Stir in the mushroom soup, tuna, frozen peas, soy sauce and seasonings. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 4-5 minutes, or until thoroughly heated through, stirring after half the cooking time.
3 Stir in two-thirds of the potato sticks and microwave again, covered, for 45 seconds. Sprinkle with the remaining potato sticks and the cashew nuts and serve immediately.

Tuna Medley



Shrimp Newburg

6 mins

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz butter or margarine
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
salt and pepper
410g / 14½oz can evaporated milk
2 egg yolks, lightly beaten
200g / 7oz can shrimps, drained
30ml / 2tbls dry sherry
212g / 7½oz packet frozen vol-au-vent cases, cooked conventionally

SERVES 4-6

1 Place the butter in a 1.7L / 2pt casserole or large bowl. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds until melted. Stir in flour, salt and pepper, then blend in milk. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until thickened, whisking after 2 minutes and then every minute.
2 Stir a small amount of the hot mixture into the egg yolks then return to the hot mixture. Stir in shrimps, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes or until heated. Stir in the sherry.
3 Place vol-au-vent cases on a plate lined with 2 layers of absorbent paper. Cover with a layer of absorbent paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds until heated through. Spoon filling into cases and serve hot.

Creamed Salmon

8¾ mins

Standing time: none

25g / 1oz butter or margarine
30ml / 2tbls plain flour
350ml / 12fl oz milk
225g / 8oz frozen peas
212g / 7½oz can salmon, drained, skinned and boned
100g / 4oz button mushrooms, sliced
30ml / 2tbls single cream
salt and pepper
212g / 7½oz packet frozen vol-au-vent cases, cooked conventionally

SERVES 4

Shrimp Newburg

1 Place the butter in a 1.1L / 2pt casserole, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds until melted. Stir in the flour then blend in the milk and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes or until thick, whisking well halfway through and at the end of cooking.
2 Add the peas and microwave at 100% (High) for 3 minutes. Stir in the salmon and mushrooms. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes, stirring once. Stir in cream and seasonings.
3 Place the vol-au-vent cases on a plate lined with a double layer of absorbent paper. Cover with absorbent paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds.
4 Spoon the hot filling into and over the vol-au-vent cases.

Salmon ring

16¼ mins

Standing time: 10 mins

25g / 1oz butter or margarine
45ml / 3tbls plain flour
125ml / 4fl oz milk
2 eggs, beaten
450g / 16oz can salmon, drained, skinned, boned and flaked
10ml / 2tsp lemon juice
225g / 8oz frozen mixed vegetables

SAUCE
60ml / 4tbls tomato ketchup
10-15ml / 2-3tsp horseradish sauce
5ml / 1tsp lemon juice

SERVES 4

1 Place butter in a medium bowl, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds until melted. Stir in flour, then blend in milk, eggs, salmon and lemon juice. Pour into an 850ml / 1½pt ring mould.
2 Cover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 10-12 minutes, or until set, rotating dish twice. Cover tightly with foil and let stand for 8-10 minutes. Meanwhile put mixed vegetables in a medium bowl with 30ml / 2tbls water. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 6-7 minutes. Stand for 2 minutes; drain.
3 Combine the sauce ingredients. Turn out and fill the ring with the vegetables and serve hot with the sauce poured over.

Sweet and sour tuna

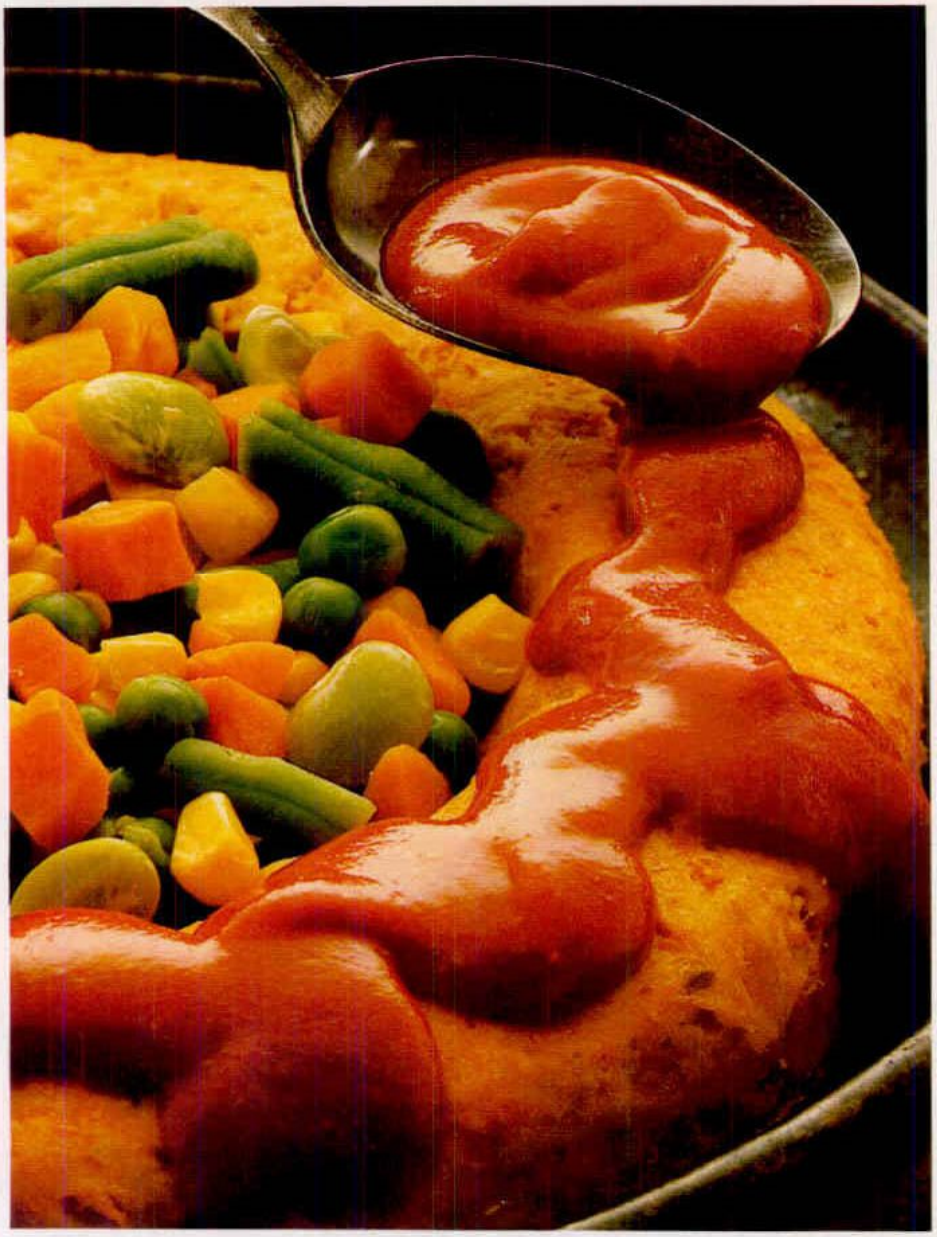
10 mins

Standing time: none

1 large onion, chopped
1 green pepper, seeded and cut in 12mm / ½in strips
1 red pepper, seeded and cut in 12mm / ½in strips
225g / 8oz can pineapple pieces in natural juice, drained and juice reserved
200g / 7oz can papaya or mango, drained and sliced thinly
5-10ml / 1-2 tsp cornflour
15ml / 1tbls soy sauce
2×190g / 6½oz cans tuna, drained and flaked

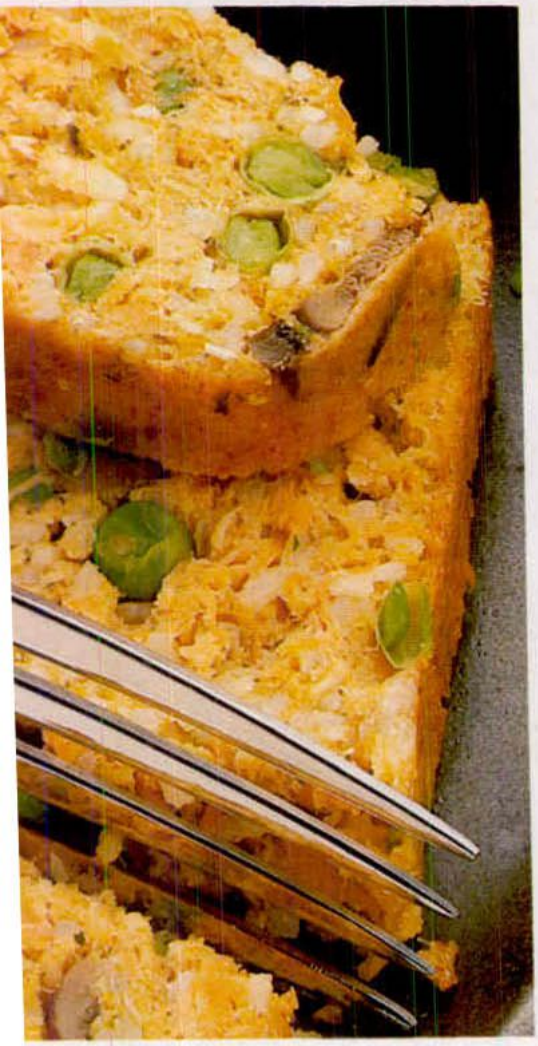
SERVES 4

1 Place onion, green and red peppers, pineapple pieces and papaya or mango in a medium bowl. Mix the pineapple juice, cornflour and soy sauce together and pour over mixture in bowl.
2 Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 8 minutes or until heated through and tender-crisp, stirring after half the time.
3 Stir in the tuna, then re-cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-2½ minutes. Serve over rice. Garnish with a spring onion tassel.



Above: *Salmon Ring*
Right: *Sweet and Sour Tuna*

RAY DUNS



Above: *Cheesy Tuna*
Left: *Salmon Loaf*

Salmon loaf

31 mins

Standing time: 10 mins

50g / 2oz long-grain rice, cooked (see rice chart on page 249)
15ml / 1tbls dry breadcrumbs
2.5ml / ½tsp paprika
100g / 4oz frozen peas
450g / 16oz can salmon, drained and flaked
175g / 6oz can sliced mushrooms, drained
2 eggs, lightly beaten
10ml / 2tsp dried onion flakes
salt and pepper

SERVES 4-6

1 Cook rice as directed (see chart on page 249) using only 175ml / 6fl oz water and 1.5ml / ¼tsp salt. Mix the breadcrumbs and paprika together. Grease a 22 × 12cm / 8½ × 4½in loaf-shaped dish and coat with the crumb mixture. Place peas in a bowl and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes.
2 In a medium bowl, mix the salmon, mushrooms, rice, eggs, onion flakes, salt and pepper together. Stir in the peas and press the mixture into the prepared dish. Cover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 15-17 minutes, or until the centre feels firm, rotating twice during cooking. Let stand for 5 minutes. Serve hot or cold.

Cheesy tuna

18 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

50g / 2oz pasta shells, cooked (see pasta chart on page 307)
2 celery stalks, thinly sliced
¼ small onion, chopped
¼ green pepper, chopped
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
20ml / 4tsp plain flour
salt and pepper
5ml / 1tsp Worcestershire sauce
175ml / 6fl oz milk
190g / 6½ oz can tuna, drained and flaked
100g / 4oz Cheddar cheese, grated
½ × 25g / 1oz pkt potato crisps, crushed

SERVES 2

1 Prepare pasta shells as directed (see chart on page 307). Set aside. In a 1.1L / 2pt dish, combine the celery, onion, pepper and butter. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until vegetables are tender, stirring after half the time.
2 Stir in the flour, salt, pepper and Worcestershire sauce. Blend in milk. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until thickened, stirring after half the time. Stir in pasta shells, tuna and cheese, then sprinkle with crushed potato crisps.
3 Microwave, uncovered, at 50% (Medium) for 3-4 minutes or until heated through, rotating dish twice during cooking.

Cheesy tuna for one: Halve all the ingredients, using an 80g / 3¼oz can tuna. Prepare as directed, using a 425ml / ¾pt dish. Microwave the vegetables at 100% (High) for 2 minutes and the sauce for 2 minutes. Reduce power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 3 minutes rotating dish once.

Easy pâtés

Pâtés made in a microwave are surprisingly quick and simple. From an elegant pâté ring to tasty smoked mackerel they are a wonderful choice whatever the meal.

Delicious as they are, pâtés made in conventional cookers are fiddly, expensive on fuel and time consuming. The microwave, on the other hand, cuts cooking time down to a minimum, meaning pâtés are a joy to make as well as eat.

If you like smooth pâtés, combining ingredients in a blender or food processor will save even more time as they can be whizzed up in just a matter of minutes.

For really quick suppers based on store cupboard standbys, the microwave will speed things along, softening ingredients for easy and smooth mixing.

Ham and Mushroom Ring and Pâté Maison.

DAVE KING

Pâté maison

20 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

This attractive pâté is substantial enough to serve as part of a cold buffet or the centrepiece of a summer luncheon.

225g / 8oz lamb's liver
100g / 4oz lean pork
225g / 8oz pie veal
2 garlic cloves, chopped
5ml / 1tsp dried mixed herbs
large pinch nutmeg
30ml / 2tbls port or Madeira
30ml / 2tbls double cream
salt and pepper
1 egg, beaten
8 streaky bacon rashers, rinds removed
275g / 10oz frozen chopped spinach, thawed by piercing the package in 2 places and microwaving at 20-30% (Defrost) for 5 minutes

SERVES 12

1 Mince the liver, pork and veal. Place in a large bowl with the garlic, herbs, nutmeg, port or Madeira and cream. Season generously with salt and pepper. Stir well, then gently fold in the egg.
2 Using the back of a knife, stretch the bacon rashers, then use them to line a 900g / 2lb rectangular terrine. Add half the pâté mixture and smooth the top.
3 Squeeze out any excess moisture from the spinach, then spread it over the layer of pâté mixture in the terrine. Carefully spread the remaining pâté mixture over the spinach and fold any overhanging bacon over the top.
4 Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 10 minutes. Leave to stand for 5 minutes, then microwave at 50% (Medium) for a further 5-8 minutes, until the pâté feels firm and is just beginning to shrink away from the sides.
5 Leave to cool slightly, then place weights on top of the pâté and refrigerate for at least 8 hours. Turn out and slice to serve.

Frosted liver pâté

11 mins

Standing time: none

450g / 1lb chicken livers
1 small onion, finely chopped
25g / 1oz butter or margarine
30ml / 2tbls sweet white wine or sherry
1.5ml / ¼tsp mustard powder
salt and pepper
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
175g / 6oz cream cheese
30ml / 2tbls finely chopped parsley

SERVES 6-8

1 Line a 575ml / 1pt mould with cling film.
2 Combine the chicken livers, onion, butter, wine and mustard in a large bowl and season to taste.
3 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, stirring after half the time. Reduce to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 5-7 minutes, or until the livers are no longer pink. Stir halfway through.
4 Place in a blender or food processor, add the garlic and blend until smooth. Spoon the mixture into the prepared mould, cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours then unmould onto a plate.
5 Place the cream cheese in a small bowl and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 1-1½ minutes, until very soft. Stir in the parsley. Using a spatula, spread the mixture over the unmoulded pâté. Cover loosely and refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving.

VARIATION
If you wish, add a chopped hard-boiled egg and 15ml / 1tbls brandy to the cooked chicken liver mixture and omit the cheese coating.

Quick sardine pâté

1 min

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz cream or curd cheese
50g / 2oz fresh breadcrumbs
grated zest and juice of ½ lemon
100g / 4oz can sardines in oil
30ml / 2tbls finely chopped watercress
15ml / 1tbls capers
salt and pepper
pinch of cayenne

SERVES 4

1 Place the cream or curd cheese in a bowl and microwave at 50%

Frosted Liver Pâté

(Medium) for 1 minute, or until soft. Stir in the breadcrumbs, lemon zest and juice.
2 Mash the sardines into the cheese mixture, adding the oil from the can for a richer pâté, if wished. Stir in the chopped watercress and capers and season to taste with salt, pepper and cayenne. Turn pâté into individual ramekins and chill 2-3 hours before serving.

Ham and mushroom ring

6 mins

Standing time: none

1 small onion, finely chopped
350g / 12oz ham, minced
50g / 2oz mushrooms, chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
30ml / 2tbls finely chopped parsley
pinch of nutmeg
5ml / 1tsp grated orange zest
2 eggs, beaten

GARNISH
small bunch fennel fronds
thinly sliced cucumber

SERVES 6-8

1 Combine all the ingredients in a large bowl and beat thoroughly to mix.
2 Spoon the mixture into a ring mould. Or if you do not have a mould, line an 18cm / 7in soufflé dish with cling film and place a glass, base down, in the centre. Spoon the mixture into the dish around the glass and smooth the top with a palette knife.
3 Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge and microwave at 100% (High) for 6-8 minutes, until firm, rotating the dish a quarter turn every 2 minutes. Cool before unmoulding.
4 Fill centre with fennel fronds and garnish with cucumber slices.

VARIATION
If you prefer a smoother pâté, place all the ingredients except the eggs in a food processor or blender and blend until the mixture reaches the desired consistency. Stir in the beaten eggs and mix well before filling mould.

ANDREW WHITTUCK

Smoked mackerel pâté

6½ mins

Standing time: none

2 × 200g / 7oz pkts frozen boil-in-the-bag smoked mackerel fillets
175g / 6oz butter
50ml / 2fl oz double cream
juice of ½ lemon
2.5ml / ½tsp paprika
15ml / 1tbls chopped parsley
black pepper
thinly sliced cucumber, to garnish

SERVES 6-8

1 Pierce the packages of mackerel twice, place in a shallow dish and microwave at 100% (High) for 6-7 minutes, until soft.
2 Remove fish from the bags, discarding skin and any bones.

Smoked Mackerel Pâté

Flake the fish with a fork.
3 Place butter in a bowl, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds, until soft. Mash in the flaked mackerel, remaining ingredients and seasoning.
4 Turn into individual ramekins and garnish with cucumber. Chill before serving.

Freezer notes

Pack ungarnished Smoked Mackerel Pâté in a rigid container, label and cover. Freeze for up to 6 months.

To thaw, transfer to serving dish and microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 1-3 minutes, until softened. Leave to stand for about 1 hour. Stir before serving.

Small cakes

Microwaved small cakes are simplicity itself! Make a whole batch of mixture, then cook as many as you need at a time. Served hot or cooled and iced, you can microwave them fresh every day.

Years ago, if anyone said you could produce a batch of small cakes in six minutes, the reaction would have been one of stunned disbelief! Microwave cooking has revolutionized baking — small amounts of mixture will cook and rise before your eyes to make soft, light cakes. As they are so quick to cook, you can make them fresh, as you need them. Store the mixture in the refrigerator (bicarbonate of soda ones will keep for up to a week, baking powder ones, three to four days).

When microwaving small cakes, double layers of paper cake cases will absorb moisture. Place these in a microwave bun tray or in ramekins for support. Small cakes will rise higher than with conventional baking, so only fill the cases to about a third full. (Judge the amount of mixture needed according to the spreading room allowed by the containers — use less for bun trays than ramekins.)

To ensure that you have equal amounts of mixture in each case, you could use an ice cream scoop as a handy measure. Follow the instructions for small cakes and use the chart overleaf to calculate the microwaving time required for the number of cakes you wish to cook. Check cakes after the shortest time to avoid overcooking.

A selection of small cakes

RAY DUNS

Plain small cakes

6 mins

Standing time: none

Small cakes are particularly quick to mix and microwave, following the steps on the right. Plain cakes will be very pale in appearance. For extra colour, add ground cinnamon, chopped nuts or cherries (see recipes overleaf).

100g / 4oz soft margarine
100g / 4oz caster sugar
100g / 4oz self-raising flour
2.5ml / ½tsp baking powder
2 eggs
30ml / 2tbls water

MAKES 20-24 SMALL CAKES

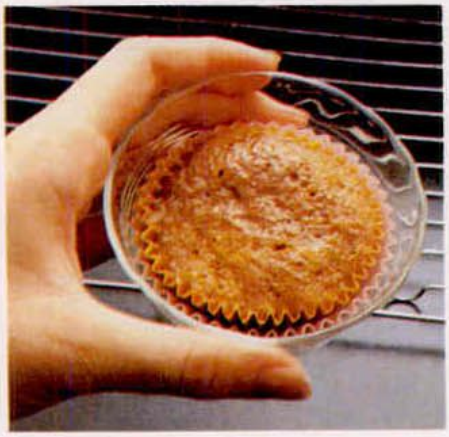
How to microwave small cakes

Place *two paper cake cases in the wells of a microwave bun tray or in small ramekin dishes. (Cakes keep their shape better in containers.)*

Blend *all the ingredients together using an electric whisk. One-third fill the paper cases, using less if using cases without any support.*

Cut *through the cakes with a cocktail stick to prevent large air pockets from forming due to the very quick rising process.*

Arrange *the ramekins in a ring in the cooker. Microwave at 100% (High) for times according to the chart overleaf. Rearrange as indicated.*



Microwave *until almost dry on top. Small moist spots will dry out on standing. Overcooking will make the cakes dry and tough.*

Remove *the cakes from the dish or tray as soon as they are microwaved, then leave to cool and dry a little on a wire rack.*

Raisin and orange cakes

5¼ mins

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz soft margarine
100g / 4oz caster sugar
100g / 4oz self-raising flour
2.5ml / ½tsp baking powder
2 eggs
grated zest and juice of 1 small orange
50g / 2oz raisins

MAKES 20-24 SMALL CAKES

1 Blend together all the ingredients except the raisins, using an electric whisk. Stir in raisins.
2 Line the wells of a microwave bun tray or individual ramekins with two paper cake cases and fill them one-third full with the mixture. Cut through the tops with a cocktail stick.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for times as indicated in the chart, until the tops are springy to the touch. Rearrange the cakes halfway through the cooking time.
4 Remove from the tray and leave to cool on a wire rack. Repeat with the remaining mixture.

Cherry walnut cakes

5¼ mins

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz soft margarine
100g / 4oz caster sugar
100g / 4oz self-raising flour
2.5ml / ½tsp baking powder
2 eggs
30ml / 2tbls water
50g / 2oz glacé cherries, chopped
45ml / 3tbls chopped walnuts

MAKES 20-24 SMALL CAKES

1 Blend together all the ingredients except the cherries and walnuts, using an electric whisk. Stir in the cherries and walnuts.
2 Line the wells of a microwave bun tray or individual ramekins with two paper cases and fill them one-third full with the mixture. Cut through the tops with a cocktail stick.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for times as indicated in the chart, until the tops are springy to the touch. Rearrange halfway through the cooking time.
4 Remove from the tray and leave to cool on a wire rack. Repeat with the remaining mixture.

Icings and frostings

Top these small cakes with icing or frosting for a colourful finish. Use any of the frostings on pages 96 and 97 — each recipe will make enough for 20-24 small cakes. Alternatively, top the cakes with glacé icing. Try one of the variations below and decorate with shredded orange or lemon rind, hundreds and thousands, toasted desiccated coconut, grated chocolate, glacé cherries, or chopped toasted nuts.

Glacé Icing

225g / 8oz sifted icing sugar
cold water to mix
food colouring, optional

Blend just enough water into the icing sugar to make a thick flowing icing. Stir in a few drops of food colouring, if wished.

VARIATIONS
Orange: Substitute orange juice for the water and add a few drops of orange food colouring.
Lemon: Substitute lemon juice for the water and add a few drops of yellow food colouring.
Chocolate: Add 20ml / 4tsp sifted cocoa powder to the icing sugar before blending with the water.

Peanut butter cakes

6¼ mins

Standing time: none

150g / 5oz plain flour
150g / 5oz soft brown sugar
5ml / 1tsp baking powder
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
2.5ml / ½tsp vanilla flavouring
50g / 2oz soft margarine
45ml / 3tbls peanut butter
2 eggs, beaten
125ml / 4fl oz milk

FROSTING
15ml / 1tbls butter
30ml / 2tbls peanut butter
30ml / 2tbls milk
pinch of salt
225g / 8oz icing sugar, sifted

MAKES 20-24 SMALL CAKES

1 Line the wells of a microwave bun tray or individual ramekins with two paper cake cases.
2 Place all the ingredients in a bowl and mix thoroughly. Fill the paper cases to about one-third full with the mixture. Cut through the top of each with a cocktail stick, then microwave at 100% (High) for times as indicated in the chart.
3 Repeat the procedure with the remaining mixture, and allow to cool on a wire rack.
4 To make the frosting, combine the butter, peanut butter, milk and salt in a large bowl.
5 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 1-2 minutes, or until bubbling and melted.

Microwave times for small cakes

QUANTITY	650/700 WATTS	600 WATTS	500 watts
1	25-30 secs	30-45 secs	30-45 secs
2	45 secs - 1¼ mins	45 secs - 1¼ mins	1-1½ mins
3	1-1½ mins	1-1½ mins	1¼-1¾ mins
4	1¼-1¾ mins	1½-2 mins	1¾-2¼ mins
6	1½-2 mins	2-2½ mins	2½-3 mins

Rearrange after half the cooking times, except when cooking one at a time.

6 Add the sugar and beat until smooth and of a spreading consistency, adding a few drops of milk if required to make it thinner. Spread the frosting over the cooled cakes.

Gingerbread cakes

5 mins

Standing time: none

150g / 5oz plain flour
100g / 4oz caster sugar
2.5ml / ½tsp bicarbonate of soda
2.5ml / ½tsp salt
2.5ml / ½tsp ground ginger
1.5ml / ¼tsp grated nutmeg
1.5ml / ¼tsp ground cinnamon
2 eggs, beaten
50g / 2oz soft margarine
60ml / 4tbls golden syrup
60ml / 2½fl oz boiling water

FROSTING
25g / 1oz butter
30ml / 2tbls orange juice
5ml / 1tsp grated orange zest
pinch of salt
225g / 8oz icing sugar, sifted
few drops of yellow food colouring

MAKES 15-20 SMALL CAKES

1 Line the wells of a microwave bun tray or individual ramekins with two paper cake cases.
2 Place all the cake ingredients in a bowl and beat together using an electric whisk, until well mixed and smooth. Use to fill the paper cases to about one-third full.
3 Cut through the top of each one with a cocktail stick to prevent large air pockets forming, then microwave for times according to the chart (see page 342).
4 Leave the cakes to cool on a wire rack.
5 To make the frosting, combine the butter, orange juice, zest and salt in a mixing bowl and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 1-2 minutes, until bubbling. Add the sugar and colouring and beat to a smooth consistency.
6 Spread the frosting over the top of the cooled cakes.

Peanut Butter Cakes sprinkled with chopped nuts

Informal supper party

All the courses for this simple but delicious menu of traditional dishes with a difference are given a special touch and are all the easier to prepare with your microwave.

The rich flavour of beef braised in red wine makes a delicious centrepiece for a 'not-too-formal' dinner party for six to eight people. The starter, a rich mushroom soup with cream, can be prepared in advance and is easy to reheat and serve to fit in with your time schedule. The braised beef can be kept hot wrapped in foil, and the vegetables take very little time to cook when they are required, so the whole dinner party can adapt to fit in with a flexible, leisurely timetable. You can microwave the vegetables and sauce while the beef is standing. Even when it has been carved, the beef can be reheated briefly in the microwave, provided it is covered with cling film.

The quantities given for the soup, vegetables and cream pie will serve up to eight, but the amount of meat should be increased according to appetites and for numbers over six.

For the purposes of presentation, you may choose to cook the beans and broccoli so that they can be arranged separately in a serving dish. If you do this, make sure the beans are to the outside of the cooking dish and the broccoli in the centre, as the slower-cooking food needs to be subjected to the most microwave energy.

When serving the main course, all the vegetables and sliced meat can be arranged on a large serving platter. The combination of colours makes an attractive presentation, making the food even more appetising.

The Grasshopper Pie should be pale green — so a few drops of green colouring help to offset the pink of the marshmallows.

When choosing wine for the supper, a hearty red such as Valpolicella complements the dishes.

MENU

Mushroom Soup
Enriched with cream and wine

Vineyard Beef Braise
Topside in a rich wine sauce

Potatoes and Carrots
Fresh vegetables cooked for flavour

Green Beans and Broccoli
A blend of delicious fresh textures

Grasshopper Pie
An unusual cream filling in a biscuit crust

SERVES 6

Countdown

The day before
Prepare and microwave the crumb case for the Grasshopper Pie; allow it to cool then refrigerate overnight. Microwave the soup (but do not stir in the full amount of cream). Cover and refrigerate until just before serving.

Early on the day
Prepare the filling for the Grasshopper Pie and pour it into the crumb case. Leave to set and chill (this must be done at least six hours before the pie is to be served). Prepare the vegetables and refrigerate in separate plastic bags to keep crisp and fresh.

2 hours before serving
Start microwaving the beef. If cooking a larger joint than stated in the recipe, calculate the cooking time, allowing 20-25 minutes per 450g / 1lb, and time it so that you take standing time into consideration. Microwave the vegetables and the sauce while the meat is standing.

Just before serving
Reheat the soup by microwaving at 100% (High) for 10 minutes, stirring several times. Reheat vegetables for a few minutes at 100% (High) if necessary. Serve and add the cream and parsley.

ANDREW WHITTUCK

Vineyard beef braise

82 mins

Standing time: 15 mins

1.6kg / 3½lb topside of beef
30ml / 2tbls vegetable oil
2 celery stalks, thinly sliced
1 onion, thinly sliced
2 carrots, thinly sliced
150ml / ¼pt red wine
salt and pepper
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 bouquet garni
watercress, to garnish

SAUCE
1 beef stock cube
150ml / ¼pt water
150ml / ¼pt red wine
15ml / 1tbls soy sauce
10ml / 2tsp tomato purée
10ml / 2tsp cornflour

SERVES 6

1 Put the oil, celery, onion and carrots in a 2.3L / 4pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 8 minutes, until tender, stirring once.
2 Arrange the beef on top of the vegetables. Add the wine, salt, pepper, garlic and the bouquet garni. Cover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for 35 minutes.
3 Turn the meat over, cover and microwave at 50% (Medium) for a further 35 minutes. Turn again, cover; stand for 15 minutes.
4 Remove meat from casserole and wrap it in foil to keep warm.
5 Remove the vegetables using a slotted spoon and discard. Reserve the cooking juices.
6 Pour off any excess, then add the stock cube to the remaining liquid. Stir in the water, wine, soy sauce and tomato purée. Microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, stirring once.
7 Mix the cornflour with a little water until smooth, then stir it into the sauce. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes, stirring once or twice until smooth and thick.
8 Arrange the cooked vegetables on a heated serving dish. Arrange sliced meat with a little sauce. Garnish with watercress. Serve the rest of the sauce separately.

Mushroom soup

12 mins

Standing time: 1 min

1 large onion, finely chopped
40g / 1½oz butter
350g / 12oz mushrooms, finely chopped
2.5ml / ½tsp ground coriander
15ml / 1tbls plain flour
1L / 1¾pt chicken stock
150ml / ¼pt dry white wine
150ml / ¼pt single cream
salt and pepper
chopped parsley, to garnish

SERVES 6-8

1 Place the onion and butter in a large bowl and cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until the onion is tender.
2 Stir in the mushrooms and coriander. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes.
3 Stir in the flour and gradually add the stock, then microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 5 minutes. Stir in wine and microwave at 100% (High) for 2 minutes. Purée in a blender.
4 Stir in half the cream, season to taste and stand for 1 minute.
5 Pour into bowls, add a swirl of cream and sprinkle with chopped parsley.

Green beans and broccoli

10 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

700g / 1½lb broccoli, cut into florets
225g / 8oz whole green beans
salt and pepper
25g / 1oz butter

SERVES 6-8

1 Place the broccoli and beans in a large casserole with 30ml / 2tbls water. Cover.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 10-13 minutes until tender, stirring once half way through the time. Season with the salt and pepper.
3 Dot with butter. Cover and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

ANDREW WHITTUCK

ANDREW WHITTUCK

Potatoes and carrots

18 mins

Standing time: 5-10 mins

700g / 1½lb small new potatoes, scrubbed
6 carrots
30ml / 2tbls water
15ml / 1tbls butter

SERVES 6-8

1 Prick the potatoes with a fork several times. Cut the carrots in half crossways, then into quarters lengthways.
2 Place the potatoes and carrots in a 2.3L / 4pt casserole with the water and butter. Cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 18-20 minutes, stirring once or twice during cooking. Leave to stand for 5-10 minutes.
4 Serve the vegetables arranged on a carving dish around the cooked meat.

Grasshopper pie

4½ mins

Standing time: none

100g / 4oz butter or margarine
275g / 10oz plain chocolate digestive biscuit crumbs
275g / 10oz marshmallows
75ml / 3fl oz milk
75ml / 3fl oz green crème de menthe
350ml / 12fl oz whipping cream
few drops of green food colouring
angelica, to decorate

MAKES A 23cm / 9in PIE

1 Place the butter in a 23cm / 9in flan dish. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds until melted. Mix in the biscuit crumbs and press the mixture into the base and sides of the dish.
2 Microwave at 100% (High) for 1-3 minutes, or until hot, turning once or twice. Set aside to cool.
3 In a 2.8L / 5pt casserole or large bowl, combine the marshmallows and milk. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-5 minutes, or until the marshmallows are melted, stirring frequently. Mix in the crème de menthe. Refrigerate for 1-2 hours, stirring occasionally.
4 Whisk the cream, and fold three-quarters into the marshmallow mixture. Pour into the case and chill for at least 3 hours. Decorate with cream and angelica.

Cook's notes

Although the Grasshopper Pie is traditionally meant to be green coloured, a variety of other flavours could be achieved by using orange or mandarin liqueur and using plain biscuit crumbs for the base. If liked, a little orange food colouring could be added, or pink marshallows used instead of white to give the pie a rosy colour.

Globe artichokes

Artichokes need no longer seem an effort to cook; with the microwave all you need is lemon juice and cling film — so you can forget all about huge pans and gallons of water.

Globe artichokes are really a type of thistle. Medium or large artichokes may be eaten leaf-by-leaf, hot or cold, either dipped in melted butter or a range of delicious sauces. Large artichokes are also useful for stuffing with vegetable, meat or seafood flavoured fillings.

Artichoke hearts can be bought separately in cans. These are the immature globes without the chokes and are very succulent.

Artichokes are very easy to cook in the microwave, needing no bulky pans and large quantities of water. They can simply be wrapped in cling film and popped in the cooker.

DON LAST

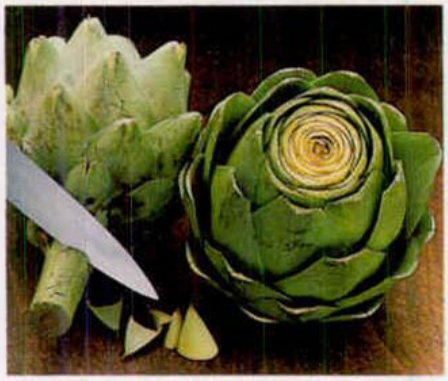
Lemon-buttered Artichokes

How to select and store artichokes

Choose *firm, plump globes, heavy for their size, with tightly closed leaves. In spring, artichokes should be bright green. During the winter months, leaves may be bronzed by frost but their quality is not impaired. Do not be put off if any leaves have a purple tinge, as this does not indicate under- or over-ripeness. However, try to avoid artichokes with loose, spreading leaves; they are over-mature and will be tough to pull apart and eat.*

Store *artichokes in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator. Use within a few days of purchase. Cooked artichokes keep well for several days when tightly covered with cling film and kept in the refrigerator.*

How to prepare and microwave artichokes



Trim *the artichokes 2.5cm / 1in from the top and close to the base so they will stand upright. Snap off the small lower leaves and snip off the tops from the outer leaves. Rinse in cold water and shake off the excess.*

Brush *the whole of each artichoke with lemon juice to prevent discoloration. Wrap in cling film or place in a small baking dish with 60ml / 4tbls water and cover with cling film rolled back at one edge.*

Microwave *artichokes at 100% (High) until the lower leaves can be pulled off with a sharp tug and the bases pierce easily with a fork. Rotate and rearrange once. See chart right for cooking times. Let stand 3-5 minutes.*

Twist *the soft cap of inner leaves and gently remove to reveal the hairy choke underneath. Then, use a teaspoon to scrape out the choke before stuffing each artichoke with a sauce or filling, or serving simply with a dip.*

Lemon-buttered artichokes

14 mins

Standing time: 3-5 mins

4 whole, fresh artichokes
225g / 8oz butter
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
pepper

SERVES 4

1 Prepare and microwave the artichokes as directed in the steps, left. See chart below for cooking times. Let stand 3-5 minutes.
2 While the artichokes are standing, make the lemon butter sauce. Place the butter in a small bowl. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-2½ minutes or until melted.
3 Stir in the lemon juice and pepper. Remove the chokes as shown in the steps and pour the melted butter over the artichokes or serve this separately in a small bowl or jug, scattered with chopped chives if wished.

Microwave times for artichokes

Number	Microwave cooking time at 100% (High)
1	5-7 minutes
2	10-11 minutes
3	11-12 minutes
4	12-15 minutes

Artichoke vinaigrette

4½ mins

Standing time: none

2 × 400g / 14oz cans artichoke hearts, drained

MARINADE

150ml / ¼pt vegetable or olive oil
60ml / 4tbls white wine
60ml / 4tbls white wine vinegar
½ small onion, chopped
15ml / 1tbls lemon juice
2 garlic cloves, crushed
2.5ml / ½tsp each dried parsley, chervil, marjoram and basil
6 peppercorns
pinch of salt and sugar

SERVES 6-8 AS A STARTER

1 Place the artichoke hearts in a 1.7L / 3pt casserole. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until hot.
2 Combine all the marinade ingredients in a bowl. Microwave at 100% (High) for 1½ minutes.
3 Pour marinade over artichokes. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours.

Left: *Artichoke Vinaigrette*
Below: *Soured Cream Dip*

Soured cream dip

30 secs

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz butter
5ml / 1tsp lemon juice
45ml / 3tbls soured cream
salt and pepper
pinch of paprika

SERVES 1

1 Place the butter in a small bowl. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 30-60 seconds, or until the butter has completely melted.
2 Stir in the lemon juice and soured cream and season to taste with salt and pepper. Turn into a small bowl and sprinkle with paprika. Serve with cooked artichokes, see page 349.

VARIATION

Yoghurt dip: Slimmers may prefer to substitute 45ml / 3tbls plain yoghurt for the soured cream, or use half yoghurt and half soured cream.

Artichoke dip for 2: Double all the ingredients and prepare as directed above, but microwave the butter at 100% (High) for 1¼-1¾ minutes.

Artichoke mustard dip

20 secs

Standing time: none

75g / 3oz cream cheese
15ml / 1tbls mayonnaise
5ml / 1tsp Dijon style mustard

SERVES 1

1 Place the cream cheese in a bowl. Microwave at 100% (High) for 20-30 seconds or until soft.
2 Blend in the mayonnaise and mustard and serve with cooked artichokes (see page 349).

VARIATIONS
Artichoke onion dip: Prepare as directed above, omitting the mustard. Stir in a good pinch of onion salt and freshly ground pepper.
Cheesy chive dip: Soften cheese as directed above and substitute 15ml / 1tbls soured cream and 15ml / 1tbls lemon juice for the mayonnaise and mustard. Add 15ml / 1tbls finely chopped chives and season with salt and pepper.
Artichoke dip for 2: Double all the ingredients, prepare as directed above, but microwave the cream cheese at 100% (High) for 30-45 seconds to soften.

Spinach-filled artichokes

27 mins

Standing time: 3-5 mins

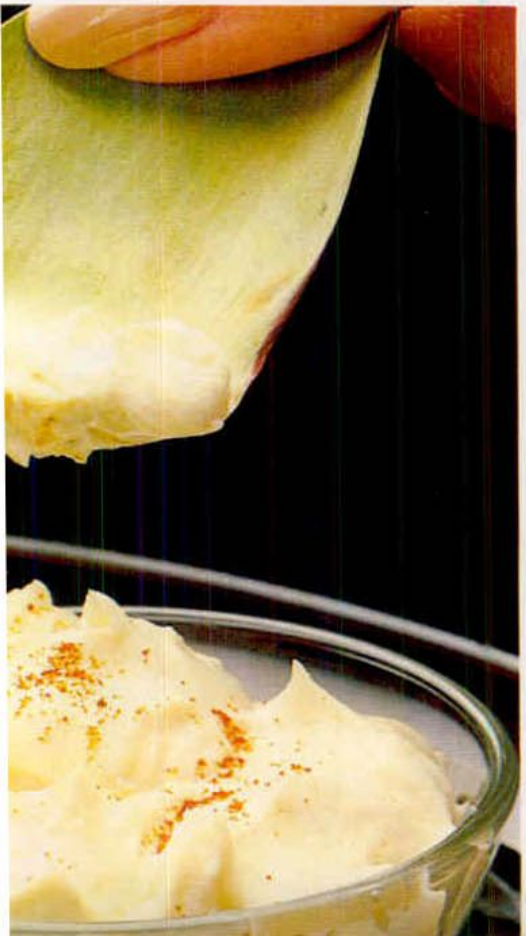
4 whole, fresh artichokes
60ml / 4tbls lemon juice
60ml / 4tbls water
30ml / 2tbls chopped onion
30ml / 2tbls chopped celery
1 garlic clove, crushed
15g / ½oz butter
300g / 12oz frozen creamed spinach, thawed (see Freezer notes)
45ml / 3tbls dried breadcrumbs
15ml / 1tbls chopped parsley
pepper
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, grated

SERVES 4

1 Trim the artichokes 2.5cm / 1in from the top and close to the base. Snap off the small lower leaves and trim the sharp tips from remaining leaves. Brush artichokes with lemon juice.
2 Place the artichokes and water in a shallow casserole. Cover with cling film. Microwave at 100% (High) for 10 minutes, or until just tender. Let stand for 3-5 minutes.
3 In a covered bowl, microwave the onion, celery, garlic and butter at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes, or until tender, stirring after half the cooking time. Stir in the spinach, breadcrumbs, parsley and pepper.
4 Open the centre of each artichoke to form a well. Remove some of the centre leaves and scrape out the choke. Stuff the artichoke with the spinach and breadcrumb mixture. Return to the dish and cover with cling film.
5 Microwave at 100% (High) for 8-10 minutes, or until the artichoke filling is hot and the leaves can be easily removed with a slight pull.
6 Sprinkle quarter of the cheese over each artichoke. Return, uncovered, to the cooker and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes, or until the cheese melts.

Freezer notes

To thaw the spinach, remove from the package and place in a bowl. Cover and microwave at 20-30% (Defrost) for 5-6 minutes, or until softened, breaking up with a fork after half the time.



Spinach-filled Artichokes

RAY DUNS

RAY DUNS

Left: *Lemon-Studded Artichokes*
Right: *Braised Artichokes*

Lemon-studded artichokes

14 mins

Standing time: 3-5 mins

4 whole, fresh artichokes
8 thin lemon slices
225g / 8oz butter

SERVES 4

1 Prepare and wash artichokes as directed in the steps on page 349.
2 Cut 2 lemon slices into 8 wedges and tuck into the outer leaves of 1 artichoke with the lemon peel showing. Repeat with the remaining lemon slices and artichokes.
3 Wrap each artichoke in cling film, arrange in a circle and microwave at 100% (High) for 12-15 minutes or until the lower leaves can be easily pulled off. Rotate and rearrange once. Stand for 3-5 minutes.
4 Meanwhile, microwave the butter in a covered bowl at 100% (High) for 2-2½ minutes, or until melted. Remove the chokes and serve the artichokes with the butter.

VARIATION

Lemon-studded artichokes for 2: Use 2 artichokes and 4 thin lemon slices. Prepare as directed above and microwave at 100% (High) for 10-11 minutes. Microwave 100g / 4oz butter for 1-1½ minutes.

Braised artichokes

24 mins

Standing time: 3-5 mins

225ml / 8fl oz chicken stock
2 large potatoes, peeled and cut into 12mm / ½in cubes
2 carrots, thinly sliced
1 large onion, chopped
30ml / 2tbls olive oil
1.5ml / ½tsp basil leaves
1 bay leaf
salt and pepper
2 artichokes, rinsed and drained
30ml / 2tbls lemon juice

SERVES 2-4

1 In a casserole, combine 45ml / 3tbls stock with the potatoes, carrots, onion, oil and seasonings.
2 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 10 minutes, stirring 2-3 times.
3 Prepare the artichokes as directed on page 349.
4 Stir the remaining stock into the vegetables. Add the artichokes and cover. Microwave at 100% (High) for 14-16 minutes, or until the lower leaves come away easily. Stir the vegetables and arrange and baste artichokes 2-3 times. Let artichokes stand for 3-5 minutes.
5 Remove bay leaf and purée remaining vegetables. Scoop out chokes from artichokes and stuff with purée or serve purée as a dip, sprinkled with parsley.

Home-made beefburgers

Beefburgers are easy to make and microwave beautifully giving a moist, succulent result. They do not shrivel up during cooking and are less fatty than those fried in the conventional way.

Home-made beefburgers microwave well because of their uniform consistency and even fat distribution. They stay moist and juicy and as most of the fat is drained off during microwaving, they are also less fatty than fried beefburgers.

The Basic Beefburger recipe serves four. To serve six: add 225g / 8oz minced beef, 1 small finely chopped onion and 7.5ml / 1½tsp Worcestershire sauce.

Basic beefburgers

5 mins

Standing time: 1 min

The timing given above is for medium-rare beefburgers.

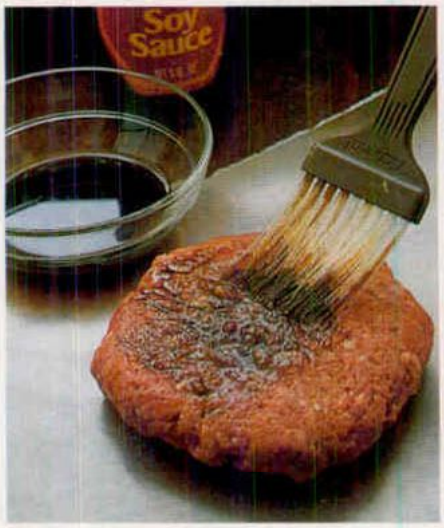
450g / 1lb lean minced beef
1 onion, finely chopped
5ml / 1tsp Worcestershire sauce (optional)
salt and pepper
4 burger buns, toasted

SERVES 4

1 Mix all the ingredients together well and form into 4 × 12mm / ½in thick beefburgers.

2 Microwave at 100% (High) following the cooking and standing times given in the chart on page 354, according to the degree of doneness required. Serve in toasted buns, with lettuce if liked.

How to microwave beefburgers



Brush *or sprinkle beefburgers with browning agent. Try soy sauce, brown onion soup mix or Worcestershire sauce mixed with a little water and butter.*

Arrange *the beefburgers on a roasting rack in a dish. Cover with absorbent paper and microwave on the first side (see chart). The rack drains off fat.*

Alternatively, *arrange the beefburgers on a plate lined with absorbent paper — this will soak up fat during cooking. Cover with absorbent paper.*

Turn *the beefburgers over. Microwave for the minimum remaining time, then insert a knife to see if they are done to your taste.*

When *microwaving more than 4 beefburgers, rearrange them after cooking the first side, so that those in the centre are moved to edges of dish.*

Let *the beefburgers stand, covered with absorbent paper, for 1-2 minutes. The grey colour will turn brown but the surface will not be crusty.*

Beefburger chart

COOKING TIMES AT 100% (HIGH)

USING A ROASTING RACK (see above)			
Amount	1st side	2nd side	Standing time
Medium-rare			
2	2 mins	1½-2 mins	1-2 mins
4	3 mins	2-2½ mins	1-2 mins
6	4 mins	2½-3 mins	1-2 mins
Medium-well done			
2	3 mins	2-2½ mins	1-2 mins
4	4 mins	2½-3 mins	1-2 mins
6	5 mins	3-3¼ mins	1-2 mins

USING A PREHEATED BROWNING DISH (see right)			
Amount	1st side	2nd side	Standing time
Medium-rare			
2	1½ mins	¾-1 min	none
4	2 mins	1½-2 mins	none
6	2½ mins	2-2½ mins	none
Medium-well done			
2	2 mins	1¼-1¾ mins	none
4	2½ mins	2-2½ mins	none
6	3 mins	2½-3 mins	none

Bacon cheeseburgers

8¼ mins

Standing time: 6 mins

The timing given above is for medium-rare beefburgers.

1 quantity Basic Beefburgers, see recipe on page 353
8 rashers streaky bacon
4 slices processed cheese
8 slices dill pickle
4 burger buns, toasted

SERVES 4

1 Prepare the Basic Beefburgers, to end of Step 1 (see page 353).
2 Arrange bacon on 3 layers of absorbent paper; cover with absorbent paper. Microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4½ minutes, rotating once. Stand 5 minutes.
3 Microwave beefburgers, see times in chart opposite.
4 Arrange 2 bacon rashers on each beefburger and place on bun bases. Cover with a slice of cheese and microwave at 100% (High) for 15-30 seconds until cheese is soft.
5 Top with slices of dill pickle and burger bun tops.

How to use a browning dish

Preheat *browning dish for 5 minutes at 100% (High) or according to manufacturer's instructions. Microwave beefburgers, uncovered, on first side (see chart opposite). Turn and rearrange if cooking more than 4. Microwave second side (see chart). Do not use absorbent paper in a browning dish.*

Bacon Cheeseburger

Burgers with mushroom sauce

12 mins

Standing time: 2 mins

450g / 1lb lean minced beef
1 small onion, finely chopped
15ml / 1tbls dried mixed peppers
5ml / 1tsp Worcestershire sauce
1.5ml / ¼tsp salt (optional)
1.5ml / ¼tsp pepper
5ml / 1tsp horseradish sauce
225g / 8oz button mushrooms, sliced
5ml / 1tsp soy sauce
1.5ml / ½tsp mustard powder
60ml / 2½fl oz white wine
15ml / 3tsp cornflour
60ml / 2½fl oz water

SERVES 4

1 In a medium bowl, combine the minced beef, onion, dried peppers, Worcestershire sauce, salt, pepper and horseradish and mix thoroughly. Form the mixture into 4 beefburgers and place in a 20 × 30cm / 8 × 12in baking dish.
2 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5-9 minutes, or until meat is no longer pink, rearranging and turning after half the cooking time. Cover and keep on one side; reserve the meat juices.
3 Add the remaining ingredients to the meat juices and stir well. Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 6-9 minutes, or until the sauce is thickened, and mushrooms are tender, stirring twice during cooking time.
4 Return beefburgers to dish and microwave at 100% (High) for 1-2 minutes or until heated through. Let beefburgers stand for 2 minutes. Serve with new potatoes and sliced carrots.

Salisbury steak

8½ mins

Standing time: 2 mins

450g / 1lb lean minced beef
1 egg, beaten
45ml / 3tbls dry breadcrumbs
15ml / 1tbls Worcestershire sauce
salt
1 carrot, finely grated
½ small onion, finely chopped
1 celery stalk, finely chopped
½ green pepper, finely chopped

BROWNING MIXTURE (optional)
10ml / 2tsp Worcestershire sauce
10ml / 2tsp water

GRAVY
20ml / 4tsp onion gravy mix
150ml / ¼pt water
4 toasted burger buns

SERVES 4

1 Mix minced beef, egg, breadcrumbs, Worcestershire sauce, salt and vegetables together. Shape into 4 beefburgers and arrange in a 20cm / 8in square dish.
2 Combine the browning mixture ingredients if using and brush over beefburgers. Cover with greaseproof paper and microwave at 100% (High) for 4 minutes.
3 Turn beefburgers over and brush again with the mixture, if using. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2½-4½ minutes. Drain. Cover and let stand for 2 minutes while preparing gravy.
4 Combine the gravy mix and water in a 1.1L / 2pt bowl. Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 2-3 minutes, stirring every minute until the sauce is thick and smooth.
5 Place beefburgers on toasted bun bases, spoon over the sauce and top with the bun tops.

Cook's notes

Make sure the vegetables are chopped finely to combine evenly with the other ingredients. If unevenly chopped they may cause the beefburgers to break up during cooking.

Cheese-stuffed burgers

5 mins

Standing time: 1 min

The timing given above is for medium-rare beefburgers.

450g / 1lb lean minced beef
salt and pepper to taste
50g / 2oz Cheddar cheese, grated
4 burger buns, toasted

SERVES 4

1 Mix the minced beef and seasoning thoroughly. Shape into 8 burgers, 10cm / 4in in diameter.
2 Place the grated cheese in the centre of 4 of the burgers then top with the remaining burgers and press the edges well together to seal in the filling.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) following the cooking and standing times given in the chart on page 354, according to the degree of doneness required.
4 Serve burgers in toasted burger buns with shredded lettuce and slices of tomato.

VARIATIONS
Use one or more of the following to make a total of 30ml / 2tbls of stuffing per beefburger.
Crumbled cooked bacon rashers (see microwave cooking instructions given in Bacon Cheeseburgers, Step 2, page 355).
Sweetcorn or cucumber relish.
Chopped stuffed olives, gherkins or capers.
Chopped raw onion, green or red pepper, or mushrooms.

Stuffed Burgers

Burgers with rice

11¼ mins

Standing time: 2 mins

450g / 1lb lean minced beef
1 egg, beaten
salt
15g / ½oz butter or margarine
100g / 4oz can sliced mushrooms, drained
277g / 10oz can ready-cooked 3 minute rice
50ml / 2fl oz water

BROWNING MIXTURE
10ml / 2tsp Worcestershire sauce
10ml / 2tsp water

SERVES 4

1 Mix the minced beef, egg and salt well together and shape into 4 beefburgers.
2 Put butter in a 2.3L / 4pt casserole, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 15 seconds. Stir in the mushrooms, rice and water. Put beefburgers on top of rice and cover with cling film.
3 Microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, rotating the dish once.
4 Reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 3-5 minutes or until the rice has absorbed most of the liquid.
5 Combine the Worcestershire sauce and water and brush over the beefburgers. Re-cover with cling film and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-5 minutes or until liquid has been absorbed and rice is hot. Let stand for 2 minutes.

Dieting and the microwave

Let the microwave take the strain when you are trying to lose some surplus weight. Fat-free cooking, and healthy food will make your next diet an easier one.

Dieting is always an effort. With all the self-motivation in the world, there are days when your willpower lets you down. Apart from anything else, it is time consuming (and hunger-making!) deciding what you are allowed to eat. It is one of the many ways in which the microwave can make life easier.

The most obvious plus in microwave cooking, for the slimmer, is that it requires no extra fat. While some fat is necessary in any diet, it is an obvious area to cut down on if you are dieting. Fat is not required when microwave cooking. Replace it with spices, herbs or seasoning that add flavour but not calories. The speed of cooking helps too. Most people's good intentions flag at the end of a day when they arrive home hungry. However, since it is as quick to microwave a portion of chicken or fish as it is to make a sandwich there will be less temptation to go for the calorie-filled alternative.

Diet Microwave Chicken Paprika, a green salad and fresh fruit make a delicious low-calorie meal.

DON LAST

Sensible eating

Any diet which eliminates one of the essential nutrients — water, protein, carbohydrates, minerals, vitamins and fat — or over emphasises one type of food at the expense of another can lead to health problems. Even if you take vitamin and mineral supplements, a fad diet may result in nutritional deficiencies. If weight loss is what you are after, diets based on one particular food may at first seem successful; but the results rarely last. What is lost is often body fluid rather than stored fat. A good slimming diet is one that maintains healthy varied eating patterns and produces a steady weight loss. However, never undertake a diet without consulting your doctor first.

Making food taste good

You will never maintain your diet if the food doesn't taste good. So learn new tricks with seasonings to enhance natural flavours. If you need to avoid fat and salt, microwaving is the perfect cooking method and you can use herbs and spices to vary food flavours.

Make up interesting herb and spice mixtures (see page 360) to keep in your store cupboard and use them to add extra flavour, to plainly cooked foods.

If you want to add fat after cooking, choose a low-calorie margarine and similarly use low-calorie sauces and bottled salad dressings. Since the microwave is ideal for cooking single portions of food, use it to prepare a diet tailored to individual needs.

Chicken paprika — cutting the calories

With microwaving you will find you can easily prepare wholesome, low-calorie meals — compare the recipes below for Chicken Paprika. Where conventional cooking calls for 50g / 2oz butter and 30ml / 2tbls vegetable oil to brown the chicken and prevent sticking, the standard microwave recipe trims the calories from 555 to 445 per serving by cutting the total fat to 25g / 1oz. You can reduce the calories even further with the Diet Microwave Chicken Paprika, to 240, by missing out the butter and using natural yoghurt.

Reduce calories in other microwave recipes in the same way.

How to reduce the calories in Chicken paprika

Conventional chicken paprika

Standing time: none

50g / 2oz butter
30ml / 2tbls vegetable oil
1.1-1.6kg / 2½-3½lb chicken, quartered
salt and pepper
15ml / 1tbls paprika
½ onion, finely chopped
75ml / 5tbls dry white wine
150g / 5oz soured cream

SERVES 4

1 Melt the butter and oil in a heavy-based saucepan or flameproof casserole. Add the chicken pieces and brown on all sides.
2 Sprinkle with seasonings and add the onion and wine.
3 Bring the mixture to the boil, then reduce the heat. Cover and simmer gently for 25-30 minutes or until tender.
4 Remove the chicken with a slotted spoon. Blend in the soured cream, heat through gently and pour over the chicken.

Per serving:
Calories: 555 Kilojoules: 2330

Microwave chicken paprika

16¾ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

25g / 1oz butter
1.1-1.6kg / 2½-3½lb chicken, quartered
salt and pepper
15ml / 1tbls paprika
½ onion, finely chopped
45ml / 3tbls dry white wine
150g / 5oz soured cream

SERVES 4

1 Melt butter in casserole for 15-30 seconds at 100% (High).
2 Add the chicken and turn in the butter, sprinkle with seasoning, onion and wine.
3 Cover, microwave at 100% (High) for 15-18 minutes, until juices run clear. Turn and rearrange once.
4 Remove the chicken, cover and stand for 5 minutes. Skim any fat from the juices and blend in the soured cream. Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 1½-2½ minutes. Pour over the chicken and serve.

Per serving
Calories: 445 Kilojoules: 1875

Diet microwave paprika chicken

16½ mins

Standing time: 5 mins

1.1-1.6kg / 2½-3½lb chicken, quartered and skin removed
salt and pepper
15ml / 1tbls paprika
½ onion, finely chopped
45ml / 3tbls dry white wine
150g / 5oz natural yoghurt

SERVES 4

1 Arrange the chicken in a casserole and sprinkle with salt, pepper and paprika. Add the onion and wine.
2 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 15-18 minutes or until the juices run clear. Turn the chicken over and rearrange halfway through cooking.
3 Remove the chicken, cover and stand for 5 minutes. Skim any fat from the juices.
4 Blend in the yoghurt, reduce the power to 50% (Medium) and microwave for 1½-2½ minutes. Pour over the chicken and serve.

Per serving:
Calories: 240 Kilojoules: 1010

Easy prawn creole

13 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

400g / 14oz can tomatoes
1 onion, finely chopped
1 small green pepper, cut into 6mm / ¼in cubes
2.5ml / ½tsp Chilli Seasoning (see page 360)
1 bay leaf
450g / 1lb frozen cooked, peeled prawns
225g / 8oz rice, boiled, to serve

SERVES 4

1 Combine all the ingredients except the prawns and rice in a 1.4L / 2½pt casserole, breaking up the tomatoes with a spoon.
2 Cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 8-12 minutes, until the green pepper is tender and the sauce is bubbling. Stir once half-way through cooking.
3 Stir in the frozen prawns, cover and microwave at 100% (High) for 5 minutes, or until the prawns are heated through; stirring twice.
4 Leave to stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Discard the bay leaf and serve with the boiled rice.

Per serving:
Calories: 345 Kilojoules: 1450

Cheesy scrambled eggs

3½ min

Standing time: 1 min

A super-quick supper for two people. Save some of your calorie quota to serve this tasty egg dish with crusty wholemeal bread, or serve each portion on a slice of toasted wholemeal bread.

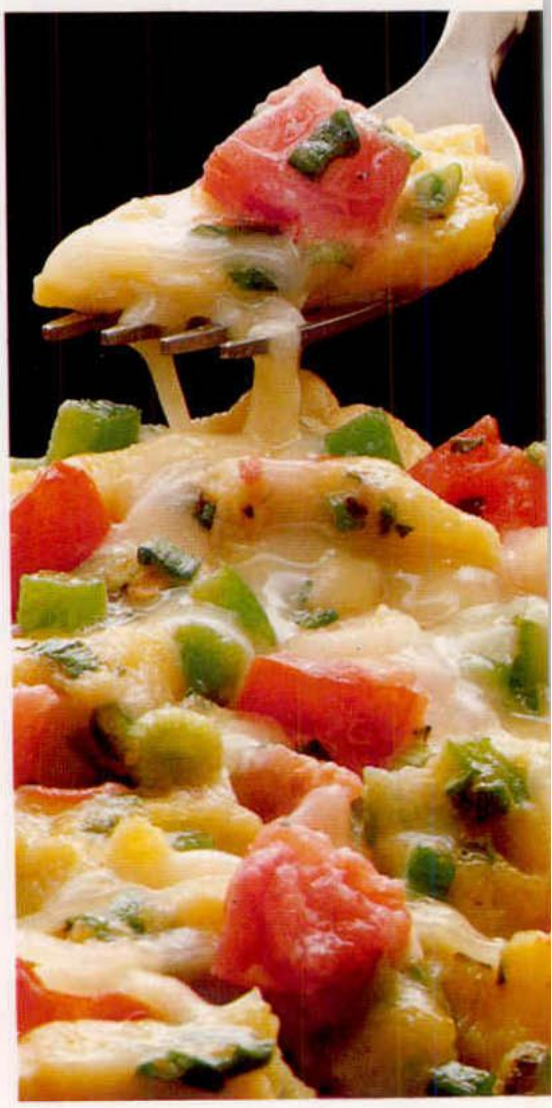
4 large eggs
4.5ml / ¾tsp Herby Salt Seasoning (see page 360)
large pinch of black pepper
¼ small green pepper, chopped
2 spring onions, chopped
1 small tomato, chopped
50g / 2oz low fat Cheddar cheese

SERVES 2

1 Blend the eggs and seasoning together in a medium-sized bowl. Stir in the green pepper, spring onion and tomato.
2 Microwave, uncovered, at 100% (High) for 3½ minutes, stirring every minute, until the eggs are softly set.
3 Stir in the Cheddar cheese, cover and leave to stand for 1 minute or until the cheese melts.

Per serving:
Calories: 130 Kilojoules: 545

Above: *Easy Prawn Creole*
Below: *Cheesy Scrambled Eggs*



Turkey fillets Italian-style

19 mins

Standing time: 5 mins

Tender-crisp green beans and lean turkey fillets are coated with canned tomato sauce to make a tasty, low-calorie dish. Serve with a mixed green salad.

225g / 8oz packet frozen whole green beans
4 × 75-100g / 3-4oz turkey fillets, flattened to 6mm / ¼in thick
4.5ml / ¾tsp Herby Salt Seasoning (see right)
300g / 10.6oz can tomato sauce
30ml / 2tbls grated Parmesan cheese

SERVES 4

1 Pierce the packet of beans and microwave at 100% (High) for 3-4 minutes or until warm; drain.
2 Place one-quarter of the beans in the centre of each turkey fillet. Fold the ends of each fillet over the beans and secure with wooden cocktail sticks.
3 Arrange the turkey rolls in a 20cm / 8in square dish, seam side up. Sprinkle with the Herby Salt Seasoning and pour over the tomato sauce. Cover the dish with greaseproof paper.
4 Microwave at 50% (Medium) for 10 minutes. Turn the turkey rolls over and baste with the sauce. Sprinkle over the grated Parmesan cheese.
5 Cover and microwave for a further 6-10 minutes, or until the turkey is no longer pink. Leave to stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Serve with a mixed salad.

VARIATION
Substitute 4 × 75-100g / 3-4oz boneless chicken breasts, flattened to 6mm / ¼in thick as for the turkey fillets.

Or choose a different flavour of canned sauce — try tomato and mushroom or red wine.

Per serving:
Calories: 180 Kilojoules: 755

Slimming seasonings

Here are three herb and spice combinations which can be stored in airtight containers for up to six months. Sprinkle them over microwaved food, they will add flavour and interest without adding any calories. But, be sparing when adding them before cooking, because microwaving intensifies all flavours — including all the seasonings.

Herby salt seasoning

75g / 3oz salt or low sodium salt substitute
30ml / 2tbls dried parsley
30ml / 2tbls dried tarragon
30ml / 2tbls dried, chopped chives
30ml / 2tbls dried savory

1 Combine all the ingredients, mix thoroughly and store in an airtight container.
2 Serve with fish, seafood, poultry, eggs, salads and vegetables.

Spicy herb seasoning

15ml / 1tbls black pepper
15ml / 1tbls dried thyme
15ml / 1tbls caraway seeds
15ml / 1tbls paprika
10ml / 2tsp garlic powder
15ml / 1tbls sesame seeds

1 Combine all the ingredients, mix thoroughly and store in an airtight container.
2 Serve with any meat dishes.

Chilli seasoning

30ml / 2tbls salt or low sodium salt substitute
30ml / 2tbls chilli powder
10ml / 2tsp garlic powder
15ml / 1tbls dried oregano
15ml / 1tbls cumin powder

1 Combine all the ingredients, mix thoroughly and store in an airtight container.
2 Serve with poultry, dry roast meats, fish, seafoods and vegetables.